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Developments in the Political Thought of Theobald Wolfe Tone



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A dissertation submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History

October 2019

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Declaration of Originality and Word Count

I declare that this thesis is the result of my own work. I further declare that no part of this dissertation has already been or is being concurrently submitted for any other degree, diploma, or other qualification here or at any other University.

I attest that the word count of this dissertation does not exceed the 100,000-limit set out by the guidelines of the Open University's History Department.

Katherine Lucas

Date

Word Count: 96,919

Dissertation Summary

Theobald Wolfe Tone continues to occupy a hugely significant place in Irish history as the widely recognised founder of the modern republican movement. Yet his political ideas have largely been dismissed as inconsistent and ill-formed, insofar as they have been properly assessed at all.

The aim of this thesis is to provide new insights into Tone's ideas through textual analysis of his written works, both in published and in manuscript form. It begins by contextualising Tone's early life, including his time studying in London, considering his early pamphlets and essays. Chapter Two argues that his understanding of Irish identity was based not on early romantic ideas about nations, but a more archetypal republican interpretation of citizen-state relations. Chapter Three offers the first full analysis of his engagement with Thomas Jefferson's Democratic-Republicanism during his spell in the new American republic, while also addressing similarities between his arguments and those of the American colonists against the British government. Chapter Four then addresses one of the most common historiographical arguments, that Tone was a child of the French Revolution and radical Enlightenment. It argues that many of the ideas he ostensibly took from his time in France in fact corresponded closely with wider republican ideas about political virtue. Finally, Chapter Five tackles his relationship with the 1798 rebellion against British rule, the main reason for his enduring legacy. It details which elements of the rebellion strayed from his original intentions, such as its descent into violence.

This thesis provides the most in-depth analysis to date of Tone's political thought and argues that classical republicanism was one of the most significant influences on his political philosophy.

Acknowledgements

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I am also grateful for the assistance of the archives I have visited, particularly the manuscript department at Trinity College Dublin which was invaluable in my research.

I owe a particular debt to my supervisors at the Open University, Dr Anna Plassart and Dr Suzanne Forbes for their advice, reading, and encouragement. Thanks also to the rest of the Department of History, and my fellow students who have been a big support; finally, to my family and friends who have persevered with me throughout.

Textual Conventions and Abbreviations

Texts

In my use of primary sources, I have used a combination of manuscript sources and published copies. The latter is especially regarding Tone's pamphlets, such as *An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland*, and *Spanish War! An Enquiry How far Ireland is Bound, of Right, to Embark in the Impending Contest on the Side of Great Britain*. Any differences between these versions are acknowledged in the dissertation. Where an original edition has not been accessible, I have used more recent editions. In these cases, I have provided the text's original date of publication in brackets in the relevant footnote and in the bibliography. I have used the authoritative translations for most non-English language texts, such as those provided by Moody, McDowell and Woods for French-language manuscripts.

Conventions

I have retained the original spelling of texts, including errors, written by Tone. This is indicated with the use of [sic].

The date of publication has been provided in brackets upon the first mention. In later uses, the date has sometimes been reiterated for clarity.

Referencing

Chicago referencing has been used throughout the dissertation. Page numbers refer to the particular edition used. In the case of Tone's *Life* collection, of which there are several versions, the original put together by his son William has mainly been used, except in cases where quotations were removed by the author and can only be found in later, unabridged versions. Attention is drawn to such exceptions when relevant in the text.

Abbreviations

Below are the abbreviations I have adopted throughout the dissertation for referencing certain primary texts:

Edmund Burke:

Reflections – *Reflections on the Revolution in France*

Thomas Paine:

Rights of Man - *The Rights of Man: Being an Answer to Mr Burke's Attack on the French Revolution*

Wolfe Tone:

Argument – *An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland*

Review – *A Review of the Conduct of Administration during the Seventh Session of Parliament-
Addressed to the Constitutional Electors and Free People of Ireland, on the Approaching Dissolution*

Spanish War! - *Spanish War! An Enquiry How far Ireland is Bound, of Right, to Embark in the
Impending Contest on the Side of Great Britain*

Introduction

In the last two centuries, Theobald Wolfe Tone, a founder member of the Society of United Irishmen, has become a symbol of Irish national resistance to British rule. The United Irishmen began as a small radical circle who agitated for parliamentary reform, before gradually moving towards seeking full political independence from Britain. The culmination of these efforts, the 1798 rebellion, has been viewed as a starting point for modern republicanism – in the sense of physical-force nationalist separatism – in Ireland. Tone's status as a national hero derives from the idea that he was, as Thomas Bartlett puts it, the "first Irish separatist", or in the words of Marianne Elliott in her ground-breaking biography of Tone, a "prophet of independence".¹ Consequently, his life has been well-documented by historians, thanks largely to the plethora of pamphlets, memoirs, and letters he left behind. The manuscripts of his personal writings, together with copies of his published works, were kept by his wife Matilda (1769-1849) and later passed onto their son, William (1791-1828), who compiled them in an edited collection entitled *The Life of Theobald Wolfe Tone* in 1826.² While previous scholars have tended to tackle his life biographically, such a wealth of resources also allows for a more comprehensive discussion of Tone's ideas than has yet been attempted.

Born in Dublin on 20 June 1763, Tone's family were part of the middling, land owning, ranks of Irish society, without significant political influence. Educated at Trinity College Dublin and Middle Temple, London, like many contemporaries of his background he became involved in writing political pamphlets towards the end of his formal education. Back in Dublin by the end of 1788, he began to support growing parliamentary opposition to the Irish government's willingness to facilitate British influence in Ireland. This was evident in his writings and attendance in the gallery in the House of Commons. After becoming frustrated with what he perceived as a lack of tangible progress in the area of parliamentary reform, Tone later played a key role in founding the United Irishmen in 1791 and campaigned initially for increased legislative independence for the Dublin parliament, before turning his attention to Catholic rights. By the mid-1790s, he had become convinced of the merits of total separation of the Kingdom of Ireland and the Kingdom of Great Britain. Upon his return to Ireland at

¹ Thomas Bartlett, "The Burden of the Present: Theobald Wolfe Tone, Republican and Separatist," in *The United Irishmen: Republicanism, Radicalism and Rebellion*, ed. David Dickson, Daire Keogh, and Kevin Whelan (Lilliput, 1993), 13; Marianne Elliott, *Wolfe Tone: Prophet of Irish Independence*, 2nd ed. (Liverpool University Press, 2012). Elliott's biography was first published in 1989, but this research draws on the revised version from 2012.

² Wolfe Tone, *The Life of Theobald Wolfe Tone - Written by Himself*, ed. William Theobald Wolfe Tone (Hunt and Clarke, 1826).

the end of that year, he was arrested for his role in the insurrection. Tone died on 19 November 1798, a week after slitting his own throat rather than face execution.³

In terms of his political ideas, Tone has often been portrayed as a child of the French radical Enlightenment and the French Revolution (from 1789-late 1790s).⁴ This is partly because he was most active politically in the 1790s and partly due to his negotiations with French army officials and members of the Directory, the post-Revolutionary government of November 1795 to November 1799. For example, Sean Cronin and Richard Roche state explicitly that “Wolfe Tone was a product of the Enlightenment and the concept of progress is explicit in his writings”.⁵ Similarly, Richard Kearney notes that it was “the idea of a French revolutionary republic” that “initially inspired Tone and the United Irishmen”, referencing the universalism of the Declaration of the Rights of Man, as opposed to the more inward-looking English Bill of Rights of 1689 or the American Bill of Rights of 1789.⁶ However, in the 1980s, Thomas Dunne acknowledged that Tone’s radicalism “was of domestic rather than foreign origin, grounded in Irish Whig tradition rather than of revolutionary America or France”.⁷ Elliott’s work, which remains the leading authority on Tone, supports Dunne’s idea that Ireland’s domestic context helps us to understand Tone’s radicalism. Her 1989 biography represented the first text to diverge from a reliance on the *Life* collection and to utilise a range of different sources, from his personal letters to his writings in the *Northern Star*, the United Irishmen’s newspaper.⁸

Those historians who have approached him biographically, such as Elliott and Henry Boylan, have debated what turned him from a relatively conventional reformist into a revolutionary advocating full political independence.⁹ These accounts provide a useful backdrop for further discussion of key elements of his thought.¹⁰ For instance, Elliott was the first historian to suggest links between the United Irish ideology and classical republicanism, though she depicts an organisation beginning as typical Whigs influenced by classical republicanism and moving away from this because of a

³ Thomas Bartlett, “Tone, Theobald Wolfe,” in *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, ed. James McGuire and James Quinn (Cambridge University Press, 2009).

⁴ The exact dates are, of course, contestable, but for Tone, the significance of the Revolution lay in the initial move towards a constitutional monarchy and the subsequent rise of the republic and its implications for direct democracy.

⁵ Sean Cronin and Richard Roche, *Freedom the Wolfe Tone Way* (Dublin: Anvil Books, 1973), 227.

⁶ Richard Kearney, “The Irish Heritage of the French Revolution: The Rights of People and the Rights of Man,” in *Ireland and France, A Bountiful Friendship: Literature, History, and Ideas: Essays in Honor of Patrick Raffroidi*, ed. Patrick Raffroidi, Barbara Hayley, and Christopher Murray (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 1992), 30.

⁷ Tom Dunne, *Theobald Wolfe Tone - Colonial Outsider: An Analysis of His Political Philosophy* (Cork: Tower Books of Cork, 1982), 26–27.

⁸ Elliott, *Wolfe Tone*.

⁹ Elliott, *Wolfe Tone*. Boylan, Henry. *Wolfe Tone*. (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1997).

¹⁰ Marianne Elliott, *Partners in Revolution: The United Irishmen and France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 20–33.

frustration at the lack of progress regarding parliamentary reform.¹¹ While Elliott does portray Tone as a classical republican, one fascinated with ancient Rome and fixated with the military and its values, the extent of his engagement with these ideas is not her primary focus.¹² Although much has been written about Tone, there is yet to be a sustained analysis which focuses specifically on his ideas and a number of assumptions have therefore been made about his political philosophy.

This thesis will explore the intellectual roots of Tone's ideas by weighing up five different elements: His engagement with British politics, the Irish political backdrop, his interest in American republican thought during his exile there, his views on Revolutionary France, and finally, looking at how his ideas were illuminated by his final years up to and including the 1798 rebellion. As a secondary purpose, the study will point readers to his major, most significant works, as well as paying attention to lesser-known texts, such as several of his shorter essays written in 1790 and addresses from 1796.¹³ There is undoubtedly some truth in Tone's own assumption that he was primarily a practical man – one “buried in matter” – and indeed this dissertation will build upon arguments that as he took in contemporary discourse about democracy and rights, it was not primarily the ideas themselves that were of interest to him, but how they could be implemented in Ireland.¹⁴ Yet, it is important to afford his ideas due attention and assess the philosophical foundations of his arguments, rather than assume a lack of coherence, or even sincerity, on his part. It is of both interest and significance in the field of eighteenth-century Irish historiography to determine the nature of his ideas more precisely, given his profound influence on Irish republican ideology. While he is not associated with his own set of ideas in the way that, for example, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1772-1778) or Thomas Paine (1737-1809) were, Tone was able to bring together different strands of political thought, from the classical to contemporary eighteenth-century republican arguments, and adapt them for a peculiarly Irish situation. The remainder of this introduction will focus on providing an outline of Tone's early life and background and a summary of relevant secondary literature. The approach and structure of the

¹¹ The role classical republicanism played in shaping United Irish ideology is also discussed briefly in the following, though in the case of McBride this interpretation comes from the author's reading of Elliott: Ian McBride, *Scripture Politics: Ulster Presbyterians and Irish Radicalism in the Late Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 88; Richard Kearney, “Genealogy of the Republic,” in *Post-nationalist Ireland: Politics, Culture, Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2002), 41.

¹² Elliott, *Wolfe Tone*, 56.

¹³ Wolfe Tone, “On the English Connection: Essays for the Political Club Formed by Tone in Dublin 1790-91,” June 29, 1790, Tone papers, MS 2041, ff 2-26, Trinity College Dublin; Wolfe Tone, “On the State of Ireland in 1720: Essays for the Political Club Formed by Tone in Dublin 1790-91,” n.d., Tone papers, MS 2041, f. 8, Trinity College Dublin; Wolfe Tone, “On the State of Ireland in 1790: Essays for the Political Club Formed by Tone in Dublin 1790-91,” n.d., Tone Papers, MS 2041, f. 8, Trinity College Dublin; Wolfe Tone, “On the Necessity of Domestic Union: Essays for the Political Club Formed by Tone in Dublin, 1790-91,” n.d., Tone papers, MS 2041, ff 2-26, Trinity College Dublin; Wolfe Tone, “An Address to the Peasantry of Ireland - By a Traveller,” 1796, Directoire exécutif, AF III 186 B, dossier 859., Archives Nationales, Paris.

¹⁴ Tone, *Life*, 359.

thesis will then be discussed. The PhD has been structured to best navigate the various developments in Tone's political thought.

Background, Early Life, and Education

In order to fully understand Tone's political ideas, his interest in the causes of Catholic relief and parliamentary reform, it is helpful to begin by considering his life, and political developments, in the period before he became politically active. Factors such as his reading of republican literature and the political climate he grew up in are key to understanding Tone as an individual, before moving on to evaluating whether the way he has been historicised is accurate. He was the son of a Catholic mother who converted to Protestantism and a father who was a member of the Church of Ireland. Peter Tone worked as a coachmaker and provided a reasonable living for the family, before selling much of his property due to an injury and eventually suffering bankruptcy following a land dispute with his brother. Though comfortable, the Tones were not significantly wealthy and were not involved in politics, though it is possible that Peter Tone would have been able to vote by virtue of the amount of land he did own.¹⁵ In county constituencies, Protestants who owned a freehold valued at 40s or more, or who had been nominated as a freeman by someone in office such as the mayor, were eligible.¹⁶ Voting rights varied considerably in each constituency and changed significantly over the course of the eighteenth century. The majority of people in Ireland were not able to vote. For instance, only around 2,000-3,000 were estimated to be eligible to vote in county Dublin during Tone's early life.¹⁷ Meanwhile all Catholics – who made up two-thirds of the population – were prevented from voting by law.¹⁸ Since 1692, the Irish parliament had been a wholly Protestant assembly, which due to the complexities of the representative system could be controlled by a small, influential number of MPs on whom the Irish executive could rely on to support government measures. The restrictions on Catholic voting and the perceived elitism of the representative system were what initially inspired Tone's plans for reform.

Tone's family background has often been highlighted in the historiography, because it seemingly accounts for his hopes to unite the various religious denominations into one 'United Irish'

¹⁵ Elliott, *Wolfe Tone*, 69.

¹⁶ E.M. Johnston-Liik, *MPs in Dublin: Companion to History of the Irish Parliament, 1692-1800* (Belfast: Ulster Historical Foundation, 2006), 193.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 164–93.

¹⁸ Ian McBride, "What Were the Penal Laws For?," in *Eighteenth Century Ireland: The Isle of Slaves* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2009), 194–215; C.D.A. Leighton, *Catholicism in a Protestant Kingdom: A Study of the Irish Ancien Régime* (Basingstoke: Springer, 2016), 45–67; Oliver P. Rafferty, "The Eighteenth-Century Experience," in *Catholicism in Ulster, 1603-1983: An Interpretative History* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 57–98; Sean J. Connolly, *Divided Kingdom: Ireland 1630-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 286–344.

movement.¹⁹ It is needless to speculate at what age he became aware of the unequal status of Catholics and Protestants, but it almost seems inconceivable that his mixed religious background would not have been a major feature of his early life. In any case, his initial aspirations were not for a career in politics, but the military. Before entering university, he showed his early fascination with the army by declaring “classical learning as nonsense”, Trinity College “a pitiful establishment”, and “an ensign in a marching regiment ... the happiest creature living”.²⁰ Thanks to his father’s intervention, he did enrol in law at Trinity in February 1781, the broader curriculum at that time giving Tone his first exposure to debates about how the state and its citizens ought to function alongside one another. Among the compulsory texts were Cicero’s *De Officiis* (*On Duties*), but also John Locke’s *Two Treatises of Government* and his *Essay on Human Understanding*; Tone would also have studied Demosthenes’ *Orations*.²¹ Thus, his early grounding in republican ideas about the legitimacy of governments and popular consent came not from the European turmoil sparked by the French Revolution, but before that, in his education.

The information available regarding specific academics he studied under is minimal, though the university’s entry records name a ‘Mr Craig’ as his tutor, who it has not been possible to trace.²² The records show other students having been assigned a specific tutor, so this was not unusual or indicative of his academic credentials. In his second year, Tone was threatened with expulsion, and only narrowly avoided that fate, for being a second in a duel alongside a student who was shot and killed. He was instead given a suspension, during which he found work as a tutor in Dangan in County Galway, at the family home of the Protestant MP Richard Martin, who employed him to teach his younger half-brothers Anthony and Robert.²³ Given Tone’s disinterest in much of his academic work, this tutoring may well have been in his preferred subjects of Latin and Greek.²⁴ In any case, it seems likely that it was there Tone sharpened his awareness of the disparity between the different religious denominations in Ireland. During his time sitting in the Irish House of Commons, Martin was a keen advocate of Catholic relief, a campaign which had gathered momentum over the preceding century and which resulted in a series of acts dismantling some of the restrictions of the penal laws.

¹⁹ Frank MacDermot, *Theobald Wolfe Tone and His Times* (Dublin: Anvil Books, 1939), 4–5; Seán McMahon, *Wolfe Tone* (Cork: Mercier, 2001), 13.

²⁰ Tone, *Life*, 19.

²¹ Jean Dietz Moss, “‘Discordant Consensus’: Old and New Rhetoric at Trinity College, Dublin,” *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* 14, no. 4 (Autumn 1996): 383–441.

²² George Dames Burtchaell and Thomas Ulick Sadleir, eds., “Alumni Dublinenses : A Register of the Students, Graduates, Professors and Provosts of Trinity College in the University of Dublin (1593-1860),” n.d., 816, TCD Alumni Records & Registers, MS. 378.415C f.8, Trinity College Dublin.

²³ For further detail on Tone’s relationship with Martin, and his wife, for whom Tone had much more affection, see: Shevawn Lynam, *Humanity Dick Martin: “King of Connemara”, 1754-1834* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1989), 46–48. Peter Phillips, *Humanity Dick: The Eccentric Member for Galway - The Story of Richard Martin, Animal Rights Pioneer, 1754-1834* (Kent: Parapress Limited, 2003), 62–66.

²⁴ His enjoyment of and aptitude for these subjects is discussed in: Tone, *Life*, 17–18.

When Tone returned to Trinity in 1783, prepared for much more vigorous study than in his first attempt, he joined the college's prestigious Historical Society.²⁵ This was the first year in which he could be admitted, in his third year of study, per the regulations of the club. 'The Hist.', as it had become known, was founded by one of the university's most eminent alumni, the politician and theorist Edmund Burke (1729-1797).²⁶ Indeed, an important part of the debating club's purpose was to train its members towards a life in politics, focusing on oratory skills, an area in which Tone gained increasing confidence.²⁷ The Historical Society set weekly reading assignments, recommending histories of David Hume and William Robertson, two of the most prominent figures to engage in debates about British constitutionalism in the Scottish Enlightenment.²⁸ That Tone would have encountered these texts as a member of the Historical Society helps to better understand the role his education played in developing his views. It has also been suggested that Tone's participation in the group was equally important for social reasons.²⁹ The Society, or at least many of its more pragmatic and ambitious members, regarded it as a space for networking. It was in these meetings that Tone first befriended a number of like-minded students including Thomas Addis Emmet, who would join the United Irishmen in 1795, having been loosely involved in an advisory capacity with them previously.³⁰ Tone's time in Trinity reached an end in 1786 when he graduated. He then went to Middle Temple, London, in 1787, to study law. Having shown intellectual promise in his early education, Tone later admitted that he did not fulfil his potential.³¹ It appears his learning did make at least a superficial impression on him, as he regretted not having studied more diligently. He had instead been preoccupied with joining the British army to serve in America in the aftermath of the War of Independence, a state of mind which he acknowledged had made him "inadvertently idle, partly owing to my passion for a military life".³²

²⁵ John William Stubbs, *The History of the University of Dublin, from Its Foundation to the End of the Eighteenth Century: With an Appendix of Original Documents Which, for the Most Part, Are Preserved in the College* (London: Hodges, Figgis & Company, 1889), 294.

²⁶ Edmund Burke, *The Early Life, Correspondence, and Writings of The Rt. Hon. Edmund Burke*, ed. Arthur P.I. Samuels (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 205.

²⁷ He notes that he won three medals, which were given as prizes for oration in: Tone, *Life*, 22. Wolfe Tone, "Speech to the Historical Society of Trinity College, Dublin," July 1, 1789, *Journals of the Historical Society of Trinity College*, vi, 135-41, Trinity College Dublin.

²⁸ "Journals of the Historical Society," September 1782, MS Mun. Soc. Hist. 1-6, Trinity College Dublin.

²⁹ George D. Burtchaell, "Theobald Wolfe Tona and the College Historical Society," *The Journal of the Royal Historical and Archaeological Association of Ireland* 8, no. 75 (July 1888): 391-99; Elliott, *Wolfe Tone*, 31-34.

³⁰ Stubbs, *The History of the University of Dublin*, 294. Tone details his friendship with Emmet in: Tone, *Life*, 40.

³¹ Tone, *Life*, 22.

³² *Ibid.*

In addition to his formal education, classical republicanism was also a growing influence in Ireland due to the prominence of the Volunteers of the 1770s and 1780s.³³ Having formed the theoretical basis of the Volunteer movement, these ideas gained renewed prominence in these decades, in turn laying some of the ideological foundations for the United Irish movement.³⁴ Indeed, one prominent figure who championed the Volunteer movement, the radical William Drennan, would go on to become a United Irish leader and one of Tone's close associates. It is easy to imagine how these ideas infused these earlier movements, the Volunteer an obvious symbol of civic virtue, embodying vigilance against elements which had the potential to corrupt the nation, including against unjust rulers. As the Volunteers drew their strength from ordinary citizens, they also overcame the perceived threat of the standing army. Their presence in late eighteenth-century Ireland made these classical republican concepts most pertinent.

Qualifying as a barrister at the age of 26, Tone had therefore reached adulthood as a number of important political developments were taking place within Ireland. The 1770s had seen the rise of the Irish Patriots, a movement pursuing legislative and political reform, and agitating for legislative independence for Ireland.³⁵ The biggest achievement for the Patriot interest in the Irish House of Commons came in the form of the '1782 constitution', which saw two major restrictions on the independence of the Irish parliament rescinded. First came the removal of the Declaratory Act of 1720. Prior to the law's introduction, Westminster's ability to legislate for Ireland had been a grey area, although many English MPs believed it was their right to do so. The Declaratory Act had formalised that position, also undermining the position of the Irish House of Lords by repudiating appellate jurisdiction.³⁶ The 1782 constitution also modified Poynings's Law, a statute that had been in place since 1494, which for most of the eighteenth century, meant that draft bills prepared by the Irish parliament had to receive approval by the British privy council prior to being approved or rejected.³⁷ From the point of view of some contemporaries, such as Tone, while the 1782 constitution

³³ On classical republicanism's influence on the Volunteers, see: Allan Blackstock, *Double Traitors? The Belfast Volunteers and Yeomen, 1778-1828* (Belfast: Ulster Historical Foundation, 2000), 30–41; Jonathan Jeffrey Wright, *The "Natural Leaders" and Their World: Politics, Culture and Society in Belfast, c. 1801-1832* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 63; Stephen Small, *Political Thought in Ireland 1776-1798: Republicanism, Patriotism, and Radicalism* (Clarendon Press, 2002), 83–113.

³⁴ The ideological links between the Volunteers and the United Irishmen is discussed at various points in: A.T.Q. Stewart, *A Deeper Silence: Hidden Origins of the United Irishmen* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1998).

³⁵ Danny Mansergh, *Grattan's Failure: Parliamentary Opposition and the People of Ireland 1779-1800* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2005), 72–79; Charles Ivar McGrath, *Ireland and Empire, 1692-1770* (London: Routledge, 2015), 37–69; David Hayton, *The Irish Parliament in the Eighteenth Century: The Long Apprenticeship* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001), 1–25; David Hayton, *Ruling Ireland, 1685-1742: Politics, Politicians and Parties* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2004), 44–62.

³⁶ The question of jurisdiction was long-running and attracted considerable attention with a number of cases in the late seventeenth-century. See: Hayton, *Ruling Ireland*, 222. McGrath, *Ireland and Empire, 1692-1770*, 49.

³⁷ James Kelly, *Poynings' Law and the Making of Law in Ireland, 1660-1800* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007), 1. Charles Ivar McGrath, *The Making of the Eighteenth-Century Irish Constitution: Government, Parliament and the Revenue, 1692-1714* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), 20–22.

had purported to right these wrongs, it did not solve many of Ireland's problems. Power still lay with a small minority who were unaccountable to the people – indeed, even to the majority of Protestants, because voting rights were partly dependent on land ownership. This situation was exacerbated by the number of closed, or 'rotten' boroughs, where patrons could rely on a very small electorate and could use the power vested in them by these boroughs to wield unrepresentative levels of influence in parliament.³⁸ The Irish Parliament had some control over domestic policy but could be easily overruled by the Crown on matters such as foreign policy, particularly regarding declarations of war.³⁹ There had been notable, earlier literary opposition to these measures within Ireland, particularly from writers such as Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) and William Molyneux (1656-1698). Yet by the mid-1790s, in view of the continuation of this strained political relationship between Britain and Ireland, many Patriots, like Tone, turned towards more radical measures.

The ambiguities of Ireland's relationship with Britain had been further exposed by the 1788 regency crisis, sparked by the madness of George III, the monarch representing the only concrete link between the two kingdoms. With the king's health in decline, it was assumed his son, George, Prince of Wales, would take over as regent. The Dublin parliament was now constitutionally able to appoint the Prince of Wales as regent for Ireland regardless of what happened at Westminster, but in Britain, one of the most pertinent questions was whether MPs would be able to exploit the situation of the new monarch to gain more power for parliament.⁴⁰ There were divisions within parliament regarding support for the Prince of Wales. Charles James Fox (1749-1806), the opposition Whig leader, and his supporters gave their backing to the Prince regent, but others, such as Prime Minister William Pitt (1759-1806), argued the monarch's powers should be restricted. Part of Fox's motivation lay in his belief that the Prince of Wales would appoint him to office. Indeed, what made the respective stances of Fox and Pitt so noteworthy was that they appeared to contradict the political philosophies of both men, Fox having campaigned consistently for increased parliamentary power against the monarch, a stance he ignored on this occasion because of personal connections. Pitt, in contrast, had previously warned against putting restrictions on the king's power, believing it set a dangerous precedent. In Ireland, the way in which parliament would respond to such developments in light of its new-found legislative independence was fiercely debated by Patriot leader Henry Grattan (1746-1820), who supported

³⁸ Bartlett, *Ireland: A History*, 191.

³⁹ David Armitage, "Parliament and International Law in the Eighteenth Century," in *Parliaments, Nations and Identities in Britain and Ireland, 1660-1850*, ed. Julian Hoppit (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 169–87.

⁴⁰ John W. Derry, *The Regency Crisis and the Whigs, 1788-9* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963); John W. Derry, *Politics in the Age of Fox, Pitt and Liverpool: Continuity and Transformation* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990); Steve Poole, "Monarchy and the Policing of Insanity," in *The Politics of Regicide in England, 1760-1850: Troublesome Subjects* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 46–69.

Fox's Whigs, and John Fitzgibbon (1749-1802), the latter representing the British administration in Ireland and inevitably supporting Pitt.⁴¹

Whether Irish MPs would stray from the wishes of the executive, as they had in the case of the regency crisis, was initially uncertain. Even after 1782, there was a tendency to follow the demands of the British and Irish governments, rather than Irish MPs serving with autonomy, just as MPs in Britain were becoming less likely to vote independently against government measures. In view of this trend, campaigners continued to argue for wider reform of the parliamentary system to reduce the influence of this small, select elite, following the efforts of previous campaigns which had emerged from the 1760s onwards. In both Britain and Ireland, the battle between loyalism, reformism and radicalism hinged on the extent to which government authority rested on traditional understandings of political legitimacy, and whether this could be determined by abstract ideas about rights. This concept had been popularised in British political discourse by Locke (1632-1704) in the late seventeenth century.⁴² Indeed, not only did Locke's ideas form the basis of British Whig constitutionalist arguments in the 1780s and 1790s, the same was true of one of his disciples, Molyneux, in Ireland, with British and Irish Whigs taking inspiration from many of the same sources.⁴³ Where some British Whigs based their arguments on Lockean ideas about individual rights, moving away from the classical emphasis on civic duty, other reformers looked for inspiration in the English republicans of the seventeenth century. The likes of Marchamont Nedham (1620-1678), James Harrington (1611-1677), John Milton (1608-1674), and Algernon Sidney (1623-1683), had laid the foundations for agitating against the sovereignty of the Crown and had argued for increased parliamentary power.⁴⁴ By the late 1780s, other Whig elements, epitomised by Burke, believed eighteenth-century reform should not be based on ideas of 'rights', but should be gradual and based on ancient constitutions. Hence, Tone found himself entering into this political culture at a key moment in the development of eighteenth-century republican political discourse.

⁴¹ Neil Herman, "Henry Grattan, the Regency Crisis and the Emergence of a Whig Party in Ireland, 1788-9," *Irish Historical Studies* 32, no. 128 (November 2001): 478-97.

⁴² John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (1689) (London: Whitmore and Fenn, 1821), 7, 75, 306.

⁴³ Julia Rudolph, "John Locke and Whig Theory," in *Revolution by Degrees: James Tyrrell and Whig Political Thought in the Late Seventeenth Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 148-68; Melinda Zook, "Early Whig Ideology, Ancient Constitutionalism, and the Reverend Samuel Johnson," *Journal of British Studies* 32, no. 2 (April 1993): 139-65; R. Ashcraft and M. Goldsmith, "Locke, Revolution Principles, and the Formation of Whig Ideology," *The Historical Journal* 26, no. 4 (1983): 773-800; Mark Goldie, *The Reception of Locke's Politics: The Glorious Revolution Defended, 1690-1704* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999), 36.

⁴⁴ For the role these writers played in establishing English republicanism, see: Blair Worden, "Marchamont Nedham and the Beginnings of English Republicanism, 1649-1656," in *Republicanism, Liberty, and Commercial Society, 1649-1776*, ed. David Wootton (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 45-82; Blair Worden, Gaby Mahlberg, and Dirk Wiemann, "Liberty for Export: 'Republicanism' in England, 1500-1800," in *European Contexts for English Republicanism* (Farnham: Routledge, 2016), 11-33.

It was at the end of the 1780s that Tone began to first harness his interest in political affairs, shaped by his education at Trinity and an Irish political scene where the primary question still concerned Ireland's constitutional relationship with Britain. His initial interest was in the causes of Catholic relief and parliamentary reform which formed the basis of his initial opposition to the way the Irish government functioned. While his ideas did not drift towards republicanism until the mid-1790s, it was in these earlier stages of his life that he received his initial familiarisation with both classical and more recent seventeenth- and eighteenth-century forms of republicanism.

Literature Review

In order to better understand Tone's political thought, it is necessary to outline the relevant literature in the field.⁴⁵ First, the progression of work on Tone over the past two centuries will be examined, before moving into a discussion of wider Irish radicalism. Finally, the literature review will weigh up other fields which have informed this research, looking at Irish political thought in the eighteenth century, and then focusing on the existing views on the classical republican revival in the period.

Interest in Tone as an individual has often intensified at significant moments in republican history. For example, Bulmer Hobson, member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, who went on to work in the government of the Irish Free State, published a version of Tone's writings in the contentious era of the War of Independence [1919-1921].⁴⁶ Many years later, in 1963, the Marxist historian C. Desmond Greaves tackled *Theobald Wolfe Tone and the Irish Nation* by imposing an arguably anachronistic class-based interpretation upon his ideas.⁴⁷ However, there are relatively few in-depth works on Tone, the bulk of recent writings on him as an individual restricted to shorter essays and chapters within other studies.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ There is no shortage of literature regarding the intellectual, political, and social climate of eighteenth-century Ireland. The work of W.E.H. Lecky served as a starting point for discussion of the eighteenth century in Ireland: William Edward Hartpole Lecky, *A History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century* (1892), vol. III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). For useful summaries on the background of the period in question, see: David Dickson, *New Foundations: Ireland, 1660-1800* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2000); Thomas Bartlett, "Ireland's Long Eighteenth Century, 1691-1830," in *Ireland: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 143-267; Richard English, "Ireland Before 1800 - 'Rational Ideas of Liberty and Equality': The Eighteenth Century," in *Irish Freedom: A History of Nationalism in Ireland* (London: Pan Macmillan, 2008), 66-114; McBride, *Eighteenth Century Ireland: The Isle of Slaves*; Hayton, *The Irish Parliament in the Eighteenth Century: The Long Apprenticeship*; Padraig Higgins, *A Nation of Politicians: Gender, Patriotism, and Political Culture in Late Eighteenth-Century Ireland* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010).

⁴⁶ Bulmer Hobson, ed., *The Letters of Wolfe Tone* (Dublin: Martin Lester, 1920).

⁴⁷ C. Desmond Greaves, *Theobald Wolfe Tone and the Irish Nation* (London: Connolly Publications, 1963).

⁴⁸ McMahon, *Wolfe Tone*; Sylvie Kleinman, "A Rough Guide to Revolutionary Paris: Wolfe Tone as an Accidental Tourist," *History Ireland* 16, no. 2 (April 2008): 34-39. Bartlett, "The Burden of the Present: Theobald Wolfe Tone, Republican and Separatist," 1-15.

The first biography, *Theobald Wolfe Tone and his Times*, which drew extensively from *Life*, was published by lawyer and politician Frank MacDermot in 1939, and was the first to point out that Tone had not always been an advocate of full political independence.⁴⁹ MacDermot's study was among the more revisionist attempts of the early twentieth century, the majority of which were keen to extol Tone as a republican hero.⁵⁰ In terms of its focus on his political ideas, another important landmark for the topic was Dunne's *Colonial Outsider*, published in 1982.⁵¹ However, unlike this research, Dunne's essay pays much more attention to Tone's personal characteristics, as opposed to his writings and the role played by a variety of different political scenes in shaping his development. The Tone which Dunne portrays was a man consumed by frustrated political ambition, characterised by "alienation and despair", and who turned to radicalism once he had failed to carve out a more conventional career.⁵² Elliott herself considered this text as an important milestone in the scholarship on Tone, not least because it stood out from the "unhelpful and unquestioning reverence of most of the works on Tone".⁵³

In fact, the ammunition for Dunne's unpicking of Tone's character had already been provided many years beforehand, though he comes to his hypothesis in a much more nuanced fashion than earlier commentaries. One nineteenth-century review of *Life* described a man "too lazy to work" who, by his marriage to Matilda before he was really capable of providing for her, left himself "under the pressure of difficulties which he possessed no legitimate means to overcome".⁵⁴ Such scathing assessments of Tone's character are likely one reason why his ideas have not usually been taken seriously. Curtin has described him as "no political theorist".⁵⁵ Indeed, James Quinn contends that his writings "contain surprisingly little political theorising" and that "intellectual speculation and abstract thought were not for Tone – he was a practical man, concerned with summarising political problems briefly and sketching out workable solutions".⁵⁶ Even Elliott, in an assessment of the impact of his time in America on his radicalism, contends that he became an advocate of republicanism as "an accident of character as much as of timing".⁵⁷ The consensus has been, therefore, that Tone's political trajectory was less dictated by ideas and convictions than by his character and biographical circumstances.

⁴⁹ MacDermot, *Theobald Wolfe Tone and His Times*.

⁵⁰ J O'Sheehan, *The Story of Theobald Wolfe Tone* (Dublin: Emtan Press, 1925); Aodh de Blacam, *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone* (London: Talbot Press, 1935).

⁵¹ Dunne, *Colonial Outsider*.

⁵² *Ibid*, 50.

⁵³ Elliott, *Wolfe Tone*, 404. Elliott provides further discussion of Tone as a thinker in: Marianne Elliott, "Wolfe Tone and the Republican Ideal," in *The Great Irish Rebellion of 1798*, ed. Cathal Póirtéir (Dublin: Irish Books and Media, 1998), 49–57.

⁵⁴ *The Quarterly Review*, XXXVI (John Murray, 1827), 78.

⁵⁵ Nancy Curtin, "The Belfast Uniform: Theobald Wolfe Tone," *Eire-Ireland* 20, no. 2 (Summer 1985): 51.

⁵⁶ James Quinn, "Theobald Wolfe Tone and the Historians," *Irish Historical Studies* 32, no. 125 (May 2000): 119.

⁵⁷ Elliott, *Wolfe Tone*, 36.

The historian Thomas Bartlett, as well as the literary scholar Declan Kiberd, have taken steps towards considering Tone's legacy in a different light. The former has weighed up the different historical arguments regarding the point at which he became a republican demanding full independence, suggesting his earlier ideas ought to have an impact on how he has been historicised.⁵⁸ Kiberd, meanwhile, in his survey of great works of Irish literature, pays close attention to the material nature of Tone's journal, though his analysis of Tone's writing style ultimately leads him to the conclusion that "although a man of the Enlightenment, Tone was born late enough in the eighteenth century to be an early romantic".⁵⁹

One thing which those who have debated Tone's ideas can agree on is that few of his musings were innovative. Yet Bartlett has once again opened up the possibility for new interpretations with his suggestion that Tone's claims "to novelty as well as consistency are rather stronger than Elliott or Dunne maintain".⁶⁰ This research seeks to take up that challenge, building on some significant developments in the relatively recent scholarship. In the twentieth century, two anniversaries introduced a new appetite for discussing Tone and the United Irishmen. The first, in 1963, two-hundred years on from his birth, related chiefly to the sphere of public memory. Several committees, formed by Sinn Féin, were established hoping to use the landmark to reinvigorate the republican movement.⁶¹ Yet, from a historiographical perspective, the second – the bicentenary of 1798 – was of much greater significance, sparking a wave of new interest in the subject. This was facilitated by the end of 'the Troubles' (1969-1998), the attempted healing of old wounds allowing for republican heroes to be rehabilitated somewhat, away from the heightened emotion of paramilitary violence.

The bicentenary prompted the most considered debates to date about how historians ought to commemorate the rebellion and its architects. Arguably, this had hitherto not been seriously attempted, with Tone tending to polarise first nationalist, and later revisionist, scholars. Louis Cullen laid down a challenge by hailing the United Irishmen as "men of action", referring to their active role in seeking Irish independence and suggesting that these figures perhaps even warranted greater recognition than essayists and writers.⁶² Kevin Whelan, meanwhile, had urged historians in his

⁵⁸ Bartlett, "The Burden of the Present: Theobald Wolfe Tone, Republican and Separatist," 1993.

⁵⁹ Declan Kiberd, "Republican Self-Fashioning: The Journal of Wolfe Tone," in *Irish Classics* (London: Harvard University Press, 2000), 224.

⁶⁰ Thomas Bartlett, *Theobald Wolfe Tone (Historical Association of Ireland Life and Times Series No. 1)* (Dublin: Dundalgan Press, 1997), 67.

⁶¹ Roy H.W. Johnston, "Foundation of the Dublin Wolfe Tone Society," in *Century of Endeavour: A Biographical and Autobiographical View of the 20th Century in Ireland* (Dublin: Academica Press, 2004), 179.

⁶² L.M. Cullen, "The 1798 Rebellion in Wexford: United Irishman Organisation, Membership, Leadership," in *Wexford: History and Society: Interdisciplinary Essays on the History of an Irish County*, ed. Kevin Whelan (Geography Publications, 1987), 248–95.

popular *Tree of Liberty* collection to consider their role in constructing collective memory surrounding 1798, portraying the United Irishmen essentially as Enlightenment era intellectuals.⁶³

Historians consequently spent the early part of the twenty-first century grappling with the issue of commemoration. Most notably, Roy Foster opined that commemoration of 1798 was worth a discussion of its own, in addition to the event itself.⁶⁴ Foster's chapter attacked elements of the state-led bicentenary commemorations, suggesting that public memory had overtaken historiography, with the consequence that key elements of 1798 – such as sectarian atrocities – were seemingly erased from its legacy. At the same time, new emphasis was placed on the role of French intervention and how this had shaped the ideologies of the men involved in the Irish rebellion, particularly Tone. Thomas Bartlett's response sought to counter the suggestion that historians had ostensibly whitewashed parts of the commemoration.⁶⁵ It was against this backdrop that Dunne published his own memoir, with reference to his family history in Wexford in 1798.⁶⁶

By examining whether the recording of Tone by historians has been entirely accurate, this thesis seeks to build on these disputes. The picture of the United Irishmen which emerged from the revisionist crisis in Irish history has allowed for a more nuanced examination of a number of important elements of the scholarship surrounding 1798, including Tone's role in the rebellion, his individual ideas, and the legacy of the United Irishmen's anti-sectarian vision. In posing the question of whether Tone was indeed the romantic national figure he has sometimes been portrayed as, this research may further shift him away from his representation in the accepted consensus.

The year 1998 also welcomed the most comprehensive collections of Tone's works to date published by T.W. Moody, R.B. McDowell, and C.J. Woods, which they had begun compiling at Trinity College in 1963. The works were split into three volumes, providing the most meticulous details yet of previously unclear references to other individuals and events in Tone's writings.⁶⁷ In the same year, Bartlett's unabridged version of *Life* was also released.⁶⁸ The *Life* collection has been republished several times since the end of the nineteenth century, but Bartlett's edition was a significant milestone in its inclusion of the fuller manuscripts.⁶⁹ The combined effect of Bartlett, Moody,

⁶³ Kevin Whelan, *The Tree of Liberty: Radicalism, Catholicism and the Construction of Irish Identity 1760-1830* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996).

⁶⁴ Roy Foster, "Remembering 1798," in *The Irish Story: Telling Tales and Making It Up in Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 211-235.

⁶⁵ Thomas Bartlett, "Sticking to the Past," *Times Literary Supplement*, January 25, 2002, 27-28.

⁶⁶ Tom Dunne, *Rebellions: Memoir, Memory and 1798* (Dublin: Lilliput, 2004).

⁶⁷ T.W. Moody, R.B. McDowell, and C.J. Woods, eds., *The Writings of Theobald Wolfe Tone, 1763-98: Tone's Career in Ireland to June 1795*, vol. I-III (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

⁶⁸ Wolfe Tone, *Life of Theobald Wolfe Tone*, ed. Thomas Bartlett (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1998).

⁶⁹ Richard Barry O'Brien, *The Autobiography of Theobald Wolfe Tone 1763-1798* (London: Fisher & Unwin, 1893); Alice L. Milligan, *Life of Theobald Wolfe Tone* (Belfast: J.W. Boyd, 1898); Hobson, *The Letters of Wolfe*

McDowell, and Woods' work was that the censorship of William and Matilda Tone finally began to unravel. For the purpose of protecting family reputation, certain elements of the original *Life* memoirs and diaries had originally been removed before publication. For instance, William readily admitted he felt the need to "suppress a few passages relative to family affairs which concern nobody".⁷⁰ The passages contained Tone's relations with other women, his criticisms of his father in the land dispute with his uncle, and some of his more vitriolic remarks about the Catholic Church, including one suggestion that Napoleon ought to have taken the opportunity to kill the Pope during the French occupation of Rome in February 1798.⁷¹ William Tone's supposition that these details would "concern nobody" did not hold water for long. Though the purpose of this study is not to build on Dunne's character assessment, some of William's omissions, particularly those relating to his father's views on religion, are of wider interest in regard to his ideas. The 1998 editions were therefore key to revealing details which were previously not available to researchers. Only Elliott's 2012 edition of her biography has been published since these were released, while Sylvie Kleinman has provided some of the most up-to-date perspectives on Tone's links with France.⁷² Given that, with few exceptions, the bulk of existing literature on Tone was written prior to the 1998 editions, the new details, translations, and unabridged memoirs present new opportunities for altering the way Tone is perceived.

Now that a fuller picture of Tone's writings has become available, Jim Smyth has sought to weigh up the different thinkers who may have influenced him in *Wolfe Tone's Library*, the most recent attempt to assess his ideas.⁷³ Smyth formulates his arguments based on who Tone does, or in some cases, does not, cite. For instance, it is noted in the article that throughout his writings, he only ever references Rousseau in passing.⁷⁴ This is a useful way of measuring the impact of Enlightened thinkers, bearing in mind that Tone, like most writers of his time, did not always acknowledge his sources, and that influence is not necessarily a conscious process. Smyth describes the wider United Irish ideology as a "patchwork quilt" and not a coherent set of ideas, although it is hardly surprising that their ideas should have amalgamated different arguments and traditions of political thought. Yet Smyth's

Tone; de Blacam, *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*; Denis Ireland, *Patriot Adventurer: Extracts from the Memoirs and Journals of Theobald Wolfe Tone, Selected and Arranged with a Collecting Narrative* (London: Rich & Cowan, 1936); Sean O'Faolain, *The Autobiography of Theobald Wolfe Tone* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1937); Moody, McDowell, and Woods, *The Writings of Theobald Wolfe Tone, 1763-98: Tone's Career in Ireland to June 1795*.

⁷⁰ Tone, *Life*, 9.

⁷¹ Tone, *The Life of Theobald Wolfe Tone*, ed. Bartlett, 464.

⁷² Sylvie Kleinman, "Initiating Insurgencies Abroad: French Plans to 'Chouannise' Britain and Ireland, 1793-1798," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 25, no. 4 (July 4, 2014): 784-99; Kleinman, "A Rough Guide to Revolutionary Paris: Wolfe Tone as an Accidental Tourist."

⁷³ Jim Smyth, "Wolfe Tone's Library: The United Irishmen and 'Enlightenment,'" *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 45 (3) (2012): 423-35.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 424.

analysis also displays an intriguing aspect of Tone's character by highlighting his insinuations that his political development had come as a consequence of life experience rather than from what he read.⁷⁵

All these works have provided a useful backdrop to this study, which aims to weigh up the validity of the existing consensus on Tone's ideas. Studies of his life have gradually achieved more balance, though in 2013 he was still being dismissed as a "Protestant, an English officer, and a failure as a revolutionary".⁷⁶ Yet, at the very least, the more resounding criticisms of Leo McCabe and J. Chartres Molony have now been reassessed.⁷⁷ In order to capitalise on the lesser studied aspects of his political thought, notably the classical roots of many of his ideas, scholars' previous work on Tone will provide useful benchmarks for how he has been perceived until now.

Irish radicalism

Though Tone's political thought has been largely glossed over in the literature, there is at least an abundance of studies concerning Irish radicalism which allows for a better understanding of the climate in which he was operating. For example, Ultan Gillen has framed the fundamental social and political changes Ireland experienced in the late eighteenth century within the context of the sceptical Enlightenment, providing a useful backdrop for understanding how radical ideas became commonplace and why they were taken up by men like Tone.⁷⁸ Gillen has also provided a discussion of how an understanding of anti-Catholic persecution in the form of the penal laws, and how Ireland was being politically economically disadvantaged by its connection with Britain, took hold in the popular imagination in the long eighteenth century.⁷⁹

There is a large body of work on the United Irishmen, with some of it focusing on Tone specifically, though without much attempt to disentangle him from his fellow members. A key moment in the early discussion of the United Irishmen was the work of R.R. Madden, including his *Lives and Times* and

⁷⁵ Ibid., 432.

⁷⁶ J. Bowyer Bell, *The IRA, 1968-2000: An Analysis of a Secret Army* (London: Routledge, 2013), 289.

⁷⁷ Leo McCabe, *Wolfe Tone and the United Irishmen for or against Christ? (1791-1798)*, vol. I (London: Heath Cranton, 1937); J.C. Molony, "Ireland's Tragic Comedians" (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood, 1934), 76–78.

⁷⁸ Ultan Gillen, "Radical Enlightenment and Revolution in Late Eighteenth-Century Ireland," in *Reassessing the Radical Enlightenment*, ed. Steffen Ducheyne (London: Taylor & Francis, 2017), 240–59;

⁷⁹ Ultan Gillen, "Ascendancy Ireland, 1660-1800," in *The Princeton History of Modern Ireland*, ed. Richard Bourke and Ian McBride (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 48–74. Note that Gillen has also published the following online article on Tone's political thought, but did so after the completion of this research: Ultan Gillen, "Democracy, Religion and the Political Thought of Theobald Wolfe Tone," *History of European Ideas*, March 2020, 1–13.

his collection on the *Literary Remains of the United Irishmen*.⁸⁰ Though Madden's work was written in the mid-nineteenth century and should be seen in the context of his meetings with United Irish émigrés and his leaning towards a narrative of liberation against oppressive forces following their oral testimonies, his collections nevertheless proved an important step in gathering materials relating to different members of the Society. It should be noted too, that his study was not entirely comprehensive, focusing heavily on the north and Dublin and overlooking other geographical areas. While historians of the United Irish movement are in many ways indebted to Madden's biographical leg-work, others such as Nancy Curtin have pointed out that it is important to avoid the trap he had fallen into – that is, the temptation to regard the literary accounts of republican figures, including Tone, as indisputable fact, or even a highly reliable account of events.⁸¹ It is also worth noting some of the unsubstantiated claims in the text, some of which are retrospectively difficult to prove, such as Madden's assertions that Tone's mother continued to practice Catholicism after marrying his father.⁸²

Curtin's 1998 history is the definitive source on the United Irishmen for the modern reader and paints a clear picture of the organisation's collective ideology, one which allows for the ideas of its individual members such as Tone to be narrowed down in studies such as this one. With an extensive account of the character of Presbyterian radicalism is provided and by focusing on Belfast and Dublin, Curtin is able to get to the crux of how a small, relatively insular group of radicals transformed into a mass movement. The text details United Irish attempts to mobilise public opinion and establish links with the Catholic Defender movement, an agrarian society noted for their role in sectarian incidents in Armagh and beyond, formed in opposition to the Protestant Peep o'Day Boys, who had taken it upon themselves to violently enforce the penal laws leading to a Catholic exodus in some areas of the north.⁸³ Jim Smyth's *Men of No Property*, also published in 1998, the title itself borrowed from one of Tone's most famous quotations, is equally valuable in its analysis of the growth of popular Irish radicalism, which again allows for a useful background in which Tone's development can be contextualised.⁸⁴ Smyth broke new ground in considering the wider context behind radical

⁸⁰ R.R. Madden, *The United Irishmen: Their Lives and Times* (London: J. Madden & Company, 1843); R.R. Madden, *Literary Remains of the United Irishmen of 1798: And Selections from Other Popular Lyrics of Their Times, with an Essay on the Authorship of "The Exile of Erin."* (Dublin: J. Duffy, 1887).

⁸¹ Nancy Curtin, *The United Irishmen: Popular Politics in Ulster and Dublin, 1791-1798* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 7.

⁸² Madden, *The United Irishmen: Their Lives and Times*, 160.

⁸³ Also see: Nancy Curtin, "The Transformation of the Society of United Irishmen into a Mass-Based Revolutionary Organisation, 1794-6," *Irish Historical Studies* 24, no. 96 (November 1985): 463–92. For an alternative view of the United Irishmen's relationship with the Defenders, which essentially argues the latter were politicised in their own right by the spread of radical Enlightened ideas, see: L.M. Cullen, "The Political Structures of the Defenders," in *Ireland and the French Revolution*, ed. David Dickson and Hugh Gough (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1990), 117–38.

⁸⁴ Jim Smyth, "'The Marats of Pill Lane': United Irish Organisation Before the Rebellion," in *The Men of No Property: Irish Radicals and Popular Politics in the Late Eighteenth Century* (London: Springer, 1998), 150–57. Tone's quotation – "If the men of property will not support us, they must fall; we can support ourselves by

movements like the Catholic Defenders, moving away from the narrow emphasis on sectarianism and giving due thought to class and other social issues which ultimately held back these groups.⁸⁵ As seen in these works, historiography in the latter half of the twentieth century had moved on from discussing parliamentary reform movements, such as the Patriot group, towards focusing on radical culture on the ground.⁸⁶

Influences on Irish political thought

As part of this shifting focus on radical culture, several historians have sought to pinpoint the intellectual influences behind these reformers and revolutionaries, Tone at the forefront by the end of the 1790s. Ian McBride has argued that radicals like Tone saw themselves as successors to Europe's great thinkers regardless of the finer details.⁸⁷ Much of the work undertaken on republicanism in late eighteenth-century Ireland has been dedicated to exploring Irish links with France. This is unsurprising, given the role of the French military in assisting the United Irishmen first in the botched invasion of 1796 and later, in 1798. French assistance was much more limited than Tone had envisaged and did not turn out to be as decisive as he might have hoped. For instance, in 1798 French forces aided the establishment of a republic in Connacht, which lasted just 12 days. Elliott's *Partners in Revolution*, first published a year after her Tone biography, is comprehensive in detailing at length the diplomatic relations between the French military and the United Irishmen, utilising to good effect sources from the French side and shedding light on the varied reasons why the connection did not ultimately have its desired effect of independence.⁸⁸ Crucially, Elliott paints a picture of a Catholic population which was not engaged with the same republican ideology as Tone himself, much to the disappointment of the French officers who arrived in Ireland over the course of five expeditions.

the aid of that numerous and respectable class of the community, the men of no property" - can be found in his diary entry of March 11, 1796: Wolfe Tone, "Diary No 2-3," March 16, 1796, MS 2048, f. 24, Trinity College Dublin.

⁸⁵ The social dynamics affecting groups like the Defenders are debated in: David W. Miller, "The Armagh Troubles, 1784-95," in *Irish Peasants: Violence and Political Unrest, 1780-1914*, ed. Samuel Clark and James S. Donnelly Jr. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 155-91; David W. Miller, *Peep o' Day Boys and Defenders: Selected Documents on the Disturbances in County Armagh, 1784-1796* (Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, 1990); Sean Farrell, "Trouble in Armagh, 1784-1798," in *Rituals and Riots: Sectarian Violence and Political Culture in Ulster, 1784-1886* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2015); Thomas Bartlett, "Selected Documents XXXVIII: Defenders and Defenderism in 1795," *Irish Historical Studies*, no. 24 (1985): 374-75.

⁸⁶ Maureen Wall, "The United Irish Movement," *Historical Studies* 1 (1965): 122-40; Daire Keogh, *French Disease: The Catholic Church and Irish Radicalism, 1790-1800* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1993); Kevin Whelan, *The Tree of Liberty: Radicalism, Catholicism and the Construction of Irish Identity 1760-1830* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996). L.M. Cullen, "The Politics of Crisis and Rebellion, 1792-1798," in *Revolution, Counter-Revolution and Union: Ireland in the 1790s*, ed. Jim Smyth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 21-39.

⁸⁷ McBride, *Eighteenth Century Ireland: The Isle of Slaves*, 51-100.

⁸⁸ Elliott, *Partners in Revolution: The United Irishmen and France*.

Elsewhere, Kearney, Graham Gargett and Geraldine Sheridan made their own contributions in the 1990s in the area of Irish radical links with France.⁸⁹ Kearney depicts the older narrative of the French Revolution's rights-based discourse taking hold in Ireland and, in particular, in the mind of Tone, pointing to his idea of a "common name of Irishman" as a typical "Enlightenment vision".⁹⁰ Put together, Gargett and Sheridan's collection of essays gives a practical sense of how the ideas of the radical Enlightenment were transmitted in Ireland, with an emphasis on print culture. Perhaps it is natural that these studies have focused so heavily on the nexus with France, a by-product of a wider tendency to assume the overriding influence of French radical thought on republican movements elsewhere in Europe. It is crucial not to overstate such influence, however, as the historiography has been gradually moving away from such assumptions.⁹¹ Allan Blackstock discusses the revival of Orangeism in the north and the foundation of the Orange Order in 1795, viewing loyalism not simply as a form of opposition to an emergent 'nationalism', but as having distinct cultural roots in Protestant songs and parading rituals.⁹² Likewise, Terrence Corrigan, in his chapter from 2009, helped to revise the accepted wisdom that a radical Ireland was keen to lap up the message of the French Revolution, again by exploring the growth of Loyalism in the period in Ireland and Britain.⁹³ A nuanced study of the most prominent expounder of republican ideas in the period ought, therefore, to be a useful addition to this growing approach combining both domestic and international issues.

It is also worth considering links with British radicalism in the 1790s, partly because of geographical proximity but also because of Tone's time in Britain and the acknowledged links between British and Irish radicals.⁹⁴ A.W. Smith's article from 1955 was one of the first attempts to properly link the two

⁸⁹ Kearney, "The Irish Heritage of the French Revolution: The Rights of People and the Rights of Man"; Graham Gargett and Geraldine Sheridan, *Ireland and the French Enlightenment, 1700-1800* (Basingstoke: Springer, 1999). Marianne Elliott, "Ireland," in *Nationalism in the Age of the French Revolution*, ed. Otto Dann and John Dinwiddy (London: A & C Black, 1988). Geraldine Sheridan, "Irish Literary Review Magazines and Enlightenment France: 1730-1790," in *Ireland and French Enlightenment, 1700-1800*, ed. Graham Gargett (Springer, 1999), 21-47; Graham Gargett, "Voltaire's Reception in Ireland," in *Ireland and French Enlightenment, 1700-1800*, 67-90.

⁹⁰ Kearney, "The Irish Heritage of the French Revolution: The Rights of People and the Rights of Man," 32.

⁹¹ Elliott, "Ireland"; Stephen Small, *Political Thought in Ireland 1776-1798: Republicanism, Patriotism, and Radicalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 1-6; Vincent Morley, *Irish Opinion and the American Revolution, 1760-1783* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 28.

⁹² Allan Blackstock, *Loyalism in Ireland 1789-1829* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007), 5-12. Also see: Jacqueline Hill, "Loyalty and the Monarchy in Ireland, c. 1660-1840," in *Loyalism and the Formation of the British World, 1775-1914*, ed. Allan Blackstock and Frank O'Gorman (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer Ltd, 2014), 81-103.

⁹³ Terrence Corrigan, "Rethinking the History of Ireland and the French Revolution," in *Historicising the French Revolution*, ed. Carolina Armenteros et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 206-24.

⁹⁴ On English radicalism in the 1790s, see: Albert Goodwin, "The Influence of the French Revolution on the Movement for Parliamentary Reform and on the Evolution of British Working-Class Radicalism," in *The Friends of Liberty: The English Democratic Movement in the Age of the French Revolution* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Routledge, 2016), 19-32; Mark Philp, *Reforming Ideas in Britain: Politics and Language in the Shadow of the French Revolution, 1789-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 102-33; Günther Lottes, "Radicalism, Revolution and Political Culture: An Anglo-French Comparison," in *The French*

issues, characterising Irish radical groups not as inherently separate from British radicals, but interspersed and enjoying close personal links with their counterparts in England.⁹⁵ In the same way, David Wilson provides an in-depth discussion of how the emigration of Irishmen to America shaped radicalism there, though not how the American Revolution influenced those still in Ireland.⁹⁶ However, Maurice O'Connell and more recently, Vincent Morley, have commented on the Irish reception of the American Revolution.⁹⁷ O'Connell charts the development of Irish separatist ideas in line with the period of the American revolutionary war (1775-1783), noting how the emergent Patriot group in the Irish Parliament drew parallels with their own demands for legislative rights. Morley looks back further to the first rumblings against British rule in America from the 1760s onwards and finds indications that the societal divisions which would threaten to define Ireland three decades later were already prevalent due to Catholic awareness of the revolution across the Atlantic and some of the issues, such as the colonies being taxed without representation, that were also applicable to Ireland. These studies have contributed to a better understanding of how ideas from America were spread in Ireland, both utilising to good effect a wealth of resources via the Dublin printing press.

Though largely focusing on Tone's engagement with Irish, British, American, and French ideas, this dissertation attempts to contribute more generally to the field of eighteenth-century Irish radicalism. While it can be described as a work of intellectual history, it is not strictly confined to that field because Tone's ideas are sometimes inextricable from his political aims and actions. This research nonetheless situates his thought within several different Enlightenment contexts, including that of Ireland - unavoidably so, given the importance of Enlightened ideas for late eighteenth-century European republicanism. In addition to commentaries on how the Enlightenment shaped ideas about sovereignty and individual rights across the continent, one of the pertinent questions regarding Tone's philosophy is whether there was a specific 'Irish Enlightenment'.⁹⁸ The uniqueness of Irish

Revolution and British Popular Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 78–99; Gregory Claeys, *French Revolution Debate in Britain: The Origins of Modern Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 1–11; Iain Hampsher-Monk, Mark Goldie, and Robert Wokler, "British Radicalism and the Anti-Jacobins," in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 660–87; Amanda Goodrich, *Debating England's Aristocracy in the 1790s: Pamphlets, Polemics and Political Ideas* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer Ltd, 2005), 113–39; Mark Philp, "Disconcerting Ideas: Explaining Popular Radicalism and Popular Loyalism in the 1790s," in *English Radicalism, 1550-1850*, ed. Glenn Burgess and Matthew Festenstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 157–90; John Dinwiddie, *Radicalism and Reform in Britain 1780-1850* (London: A & C Black, 1992), 169–95.

⁹⁵ A.W Smith, "Irish Rebels and English Radicals 1798-1820," *Past and Present*, no. 7 (April 1955): 78–85.

⁹⁶ David A. Wilson, *United Irishmen, United States: Immigrant Radicals in the Early Republic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).

⁹⁷ Maurice O'Connell, *Irish Politics and Social Conflict in the Age of the American Revolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1965); Morley, *Irish Opinion and the American Revolution, 1760-1783*.

⁹⁸ Jonathan Israel, *Revolutionary Ideas: An Intellectual History of the French Revolution from The Rights of Man to Robespierre* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 6–30; Keith Baker, "Political Languages of the French Revolution," in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Political Thought*, ed. Mark Goldie and Robert Wokler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 626–53; Robert Wokler, "The Enlightenment and the French Revolutionary Birth Pangs of Modernity," in *Rousseau, the Age of*

democratic thought has formed a relatively small sub-section of scholarship on ideas within Ireland in the period.⁹⁹ Where many have emphasised the impact of a European-Atlantic Enlightenment, Michael Brown is one of the few to define an Irish Enlightenment in its own context, depicted not so much as a generic move towards progressive values, but due to the increasing prominence of reason.¹⁰⁰ The role of all three churches, Catholic, Presbyterian, and Anglican, were central to how ideas were received in Ireland, as Brown argues. Máire Kennedy, who has written extensively on the introduction of Enlightened ideas from Europe in Ireland, does so by focusing on the reception of books.¹⁰¹ Stephen Small, meanwhile, notes that the new brand of French republicanism of the 1790s which inspired, but did not create on its own, Irish rebels “cannot be understood without recognising continuities with its Patriot and Whiggish roots”.¹⁰² These discussions have all aided our understanding of the intellectual environment in which Tone was operating.

Classical republicanism

Even a cursory reading of Tone’s biography makes it clear why he became associated with contemporary revolutionary ideas. However, as part of its attempt to reassess Tone’s views, this research will further draw on historiographical understandings of the resurgence of classical republicanism studies. These works have focused predominantly on the revival of these values in the Florentine republicanism of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as well as in the French and British republican traditions of the seventeenth century, continuing into the eighteenth century.¹⁰³ The

Enlightenment, and Their Legacies, ed. Bryan Garsten (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 185–214; Jonathan Israel, “Europe and the Remaking of the World,” in *Democratic Enlightenment: Philosophy, Revolution, and Human Rights 1750-1790* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 411–631; Daniel Roche, “The King and the People,” in *France in the Enlightenment* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998), 287–320.

⁹⁹ Small, *Political Thought in Ireland 1776-1798: Republicanism, Patriotism, and Radicalism*, 2002, 13–48; Ultan Gillen, “Constructing Democratic Thought in Ireland in the Age of Revolution, 1775-1800,” in *Re-Imagining Democracy in the Age of Revolutions: America, France, Britain, Ireland 1750-1850*, ed. Joanna Innes and Mark Philp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 149–91; McBride, “The Irish Enlightenment and Its Enemies.”

¹⁰⁰ Michael Brown, *The Irish Enlightenment* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2016).

¹⁰¹ Máire Kennedy, “Reading the Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century Ireland,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 45, no. 3 (2012): 355–78; Máire Kennedy, *French Books in Eighteenth-Century Ireland* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2001). Máire Kennedy, “Readership in France: The Irish Experience,” in *Ireland and French Enlightenment, 1700-1800* (Basingstoke: Springer, 1999), 3–21.

¹⁰² Small, *Political Thought in Ireland 1776-1798: Republicanism, Patriotism, and Radicalism*, 227.

¹⁰³ Quentin Skinner, “Machiavelli’s Discorsi and the Pre-Humanist Origins of Republican Ideas,” in *Machiavelli and Republicanism*, ed. Gisela Bock, Maurizio Viroli, and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 119–43; Paul A. Rahe, *Republics Ancient and Modern: Classical Republicanism and the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); Vickie B. Sullivan, “Machiavelli’s Republicanism,” in *Machiavelli, Hobbes, and the Formation of a Liberal Republicanism in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 31–80; Richard Dagger, “The Possibility of Republican Liberalism,” in *Civic Virtues: Rights, Citizenship, and Republican Liberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 11–23; James Hankins, “Machiavelli, Civic Humanism, and the Humanist Politics of Virtue,” *Italian Culture* 32, no. 2 (September 2014): 98–109. John M. Najemy, “Civic Humanism and Florentine Politics,” in

revitalisation of these ideas has been found across Europe, including but not limited to seventeenth century English civil war republicanism, and to the philosophies of *Fénelon*, *Montesquieu*, and *Rousseau in France*.¹⁰⁴ Neo-republican thinkers looked to ancient city-states as examples of effective government which protected their people, but also as inherently unstable entities whose survival depended on the cultivation of political and military virtue, and ultimately on their citizens' willingness to sacrifice themselves for the protection of the polis. Still in the eighteenth century, republicans stressed the importance of citizens being intrinsically linked to the state, rather than being at complete liberty from it, which may be best summarised by the English theorist Sidney's *Discourses Concerning Government*: "The good which man naturally desires for himself, children, and friends, we find no place in the world where the inhabitants do not enter into some kind of society or government to restrain it."¹⁰⁵

In spite of his persistent references to virtue, military bravery, and citizen duty, Tone has not been understood as an exponent of the type of classical republicanism that experienced a revival in early-modern Europe and later, in England, France, and America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.¹⁰⁶ The writers most directly associated with the so-called classical republican tradition, such as Cicero and Polybius, held that, for a state to work effectively, it was vital for citizens to have a stake in society in order to be incentivised to defend the nation.¹⁰⁷ Interpretations of the relationship between citizens and the state began to shift in favour of the former's needs, with theorists such as Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, bringing to the fore debates about social contract theory and the merits of different forms of government. The ideological battles waged as part of the French Revolution would therefore combine classical ideas about citizen duty with eighteenth-century

Renaissance Civic Humanism: Reappraisals and Reflections, ed. James Hankins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 75–105.

¹⁰⁴ Rachel Hammersley, *The English Republican Tradition and Eighteenth-Century France: Between the Ancients and the Moderns* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 14–33; Wyger Velema and Arthur Weststeijn, "Classical Republicanism and Ancient Republican Models," in *Ancient Models in the Early Modern Republican Imagination* (Boston: Brill, 2017), 1–20; On liberal thought in Ireland prior to the reforms of the late eighteenth century, see: Caroline Robbins, *The Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman: Studies in the Transmission, Development and Circumstance of English Liberal Thought from the Restoration of Charles II until the War with the Thirteen Colonies* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1959), 134–64.

¹⁰⁵ Algernon Sidney, *Discourses Concerning Government* (Edinburgh: A. Millar, 1763), 151.

¹⁰⁶ Iseult Honohan, *Civic Republicanism* (London: Routledge, 2003); Skinner, "Machiavelli's Discorsi and the Pre-Humanist Origins of Republican Ideas"; J.G.A. Pocock, "Value and History in the Prerevolutionary Atlantic," in *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 333–553; Hans Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance: Civic Humanism and Republican Liberty in an Age of Classicism and Tyranny* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966); Hankins, "Machiavelli, Civic Humanism, and the Humanist Politics of Virtue."

¹⁰⁷ Marcus Tullius Cicero, *On Duties: Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (44BC)*, ed. M.T. Griffin and E.M. Atkins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Brian C. McGing, *Polybius' Histories (264 BC–146 BC)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). Elliott is the only commentator to note Tone's admiration for classical virtue, but even she does not identify this as a central characteristic of his thought. Elliott, *Wolfe Tone*, 54, 204.

notions of rights of men. Such rhetoric consequently spread throughout Europe in the late 1780s and throughout the 1790s.¹⁰⁸

In Ireland, print culture played a pivotal role in disseminating this classical republican model to radicals eager to change the existing parliamentary system. Reformers like Tone also imbibed these ideas through the works of significant political figures such as the propagandist and politician Sir Edward Newenham (1732-1814), whose arguments for parliamentary reform were partly inspired by Charles Lucas's (1713-1771) civic republican discourse from earlier in the century.¹⁰⁹ The idea that Irish society could be based on the values of ancient Rome and Greece gained traction again as France veered towards revolution and such debates were being seized upon in numerous publications. These ideas were not limited to newspapers with a smaller reach, such as the Volunteer Evening Post.¹¹⁰ The rhetoric of civic republicanism, as a means of expressing grievances and ideals, could as easily be found in more readily available patriotic newspapers like the Hibernian Journal or the Freeman's Journal.¹¹¹ Moreover, it is conceivable that Tone would have had access to such ideas not only through reading these publications himself, but through mixing in the political clubs of which he was a member even prior to the United Irishmen, and through his associations both in Dublin and in the north.¹¹² In this way, many contemporary debates were in fact shaped by classical republican ideas.

The seminal text in the scholarship dedicated to the revival of classical republicanism more widely across the world was J.G.A. Pocock's *Machiavellian Moment*.¹¹³ Pocock argued that Machiavelli's use of ancient ideas in response to Florence's problems held relevance for the American revolution – the 'moment' he refers to being the point at which new republics had to consider how their new system could be maintained long-term. Helpfully, by then, Hans Baron had coined the term 'civic

¹⁰⁸ Jonathan Sperber, "A Decade of Revolution: France, 1789-99," in *Revolutionary Europe, 1780-1850* (London: Routledge, 2014), 58–110; Martyn P. Thompson, "Ideas of Europe during the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 55, no. 1 (January 1994): 37–58.

¹⁰⁹ James Kelly has shown how classical republicanism made its way into the public sphere: James Kelly, *Sir Edward Newenham, MP, 1734-1814: Defender of the Protestant Constitution* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), 30–45. Also see: T.C. Barnard, "Writing and Publishing Histories in Eighteenth-Century Ireland," in *Constructing the Past: Writing Irish History, 1600-1800*, ed. Mark Williams and Stephen Paul Forrest (Woodbridge, 2010), 95–113; Ultan Gillen, "Constructing Counter-Revolutionary History in Late Eighteenth-Century Ireland," in *Constructing the Past: Writing Irish History, 1600-1800*, 136–57.

¹¹⁰ Martyn J Powell, "The Volunteer Evening Post and Patriotic Print Culture in Late Eighteenth-Century Ireland," in *Constructing the Past: Writing Irish History, 1600-1800*, 113–35.

¹¹¹ Jacqueline Hill has argued convincingly throughout her book that by the late eighteenth century Irish Patriotism, disseminated through print culture, was significantly influenced by Whiggish Protestant elements in Dublin society. It is contended here that this was another source from which Tone could have formulated his ideas: Jacqueline Hill, *From Patriots to Unionists: Dublin Civic Politics and Irish Protestant Patriotism, 1660-1840* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

¹¹² R.V. Comerford and Jennifer Kelly, *Associational Culture in Ireland and Abroad* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2010).

¹¹³ Pocock, "Value and History in the Pre-revolutionary Atlantic."

humanism' to convey his interpretation of the importance of citizen character in shaping an otherwise chaotic society, this term specifically referring to that collection of ideas dating back to Rome and Greece.¹¹⁴ While Pocock's book remains the staple reference for studies of classical republicanism, recent critics have started to re-assess whether this generic republican synthesis is the best method of explaining modern events, given the peculiarities of each nation's development.¹¹⁵ This is particularly pertinent in the context of this research, given the various, and at times, contradictory influences on Tone.

Aims and Methods

Several gaps in the existing literature on Tone have therefore emerged. There has been a tendency to regard his ideas as unworthy of sufficient analysis, and as a consequence, he has been understood predominantly as having utilised French republican ideas for practical political aims, rather than weighing up the more complex intellectual roots of his political thought. A further by-product of the current consensus is that his engagement with classical republicanism, both direct and indirect, has not received due attention. Thus, this thesis will pay attention to the significance of classical republicanism and suggest it in fact played a more formative role in shaping Tone's ideas than the French Enlightenment. Where the existing historiography has emphasised the French Enlightenment as not the sole inspiration, but the most significant intellectual influence behind Tone's development, other political contexts will now be given proper consideration.

In order to address these gaps, the majority of the primary materials scrutinised will be taken from his pamphlets and personal correspondence, so that his own interpretations of his time in England, Ireland, America, and France, can be gauged. While the amount of autobiographical material is a benefit in that these documents provide huge insight, the pitfalls of relying on Tone's own versions of events are acknowledged, especially in instances where he was attempting to garner support for a particular cause, whether that was Catholic relief or his planning of a rebellion. His private correspondence, such as his letters to his wife Matilda, and to other members of the United Irishmen, is nevertheless revealing. These papers are of particular value as it was never envisaged at the time of

¹¹⁴ Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance: Civic Humanism and Republican Liberty in an Age of Classicism and Tyranny*. Baron's work prompted further debate on the differences between civic humanism and liberalism, with the stricter characteristics of the former, and much of the subsequent literature on liberty, for example that of Philip Pettit, can be traced to these debates. Phillip Pettit, "Liberty as Non-Domination," in *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

¹¹⁵ Daniel T. Rodgers, "Republicanism: The Career of a Concept," *The Journal of American History* 79, no. 1 (June 1992): 11–38. Robert E. Shalhope, "Toward a Republican Synthesis: The Emergence of an Understanding of Republicanism in American Historiography," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (January 1972): 49–80.

writing that they would be released for public consumption: they can therefore be usefully compared and contrasted with his political pamphlets.

The primary aim of this research is to evaluate whether Tone's ideas have been fairly and accurately assessed. The thesis will give due weighting to previously neglected areas of his life, such as his classical education and his time in Britain. With much of the literature suggesting that his ideas were shaped by a combination of Irish Whig culture and radical influences from France and America, it is hoped this study will cast new light on how Tone is understood and argue that his political ideas developed not purely due to the radical Enlightenment, but at the contact of several different, though sometimes interlinked, political contexts.

The main method of inquiry used is a textual analysis of Tone's writings. These works are explored in the context of the British, Irish, French, and American political scenes in the late 1780s and 1790s, through an approach inspired by the 'linguistic turn' and the concept that language is itself an insight into philosophy.¹¹⁶ Measuring what Quentin Skinner has called the "illocutionary force" behind Tone's works - that is, the intention behind Tone's writings and the reasons why he makes his statements - is central to understanding the intricacies of his ideas.¹¹⁷ Herein lies a key difference, as Annabel Brett points out, between intellectual and cultural history: critical thinking is applied beyond the wider social, economic, and political situations surrounding texts, to focus chiefly on the author's meaning.¹¹⁸ If the motivation behind this research is to understand the ideological contexts behind Tone's philosophy, then following Pocock's strand of 'Cambridge School' intellectual history, these writings cannot be understood as part of an eighteenth-century 'political thought' in its abstract entirety: rather, each individual text is revealing of its own context.¹¹⁹ This re-evaluation of intellectual history from the 1970s holds particular relevance in Chapter Four, in light of Tone's misinformation in his writings to French government and military officials. Yet what is most pertinent for his legacy is Skinner's contention that modern ideas and concepts cannot be imposed onto past discourses.¹²⁰ Instead, writings such as Tone's must be placed firmly in the ideological contexts of the

¹¹⁶ Gustav Bergmann, "Two Types of Linguistic Philosophy," *The Review of Metaphysics* 5 (March 1952): 417–38.

¹¹⁷ Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding the History of Ideas," in *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and His Critics*, ed. James Tully (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 29–67.

¹¹⁸ Annabel Brett and David Cannadine, "What Is Intellectual History Now?," in *What Is History Now?* (New York: Houndsmill, 2002), 113–31.

¹¹⁹ J.G.A. Pocock, "Languages and Their Implications: The Transformation of the Study of Political Thought," in *Politics, Language, and Time: Essays on Political Thought and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 3–42. Also see: John Dunn, "The History of Political Theory," in *The History of Political Theory and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 11–39.

¹²⁰ Richard Whatmore, "Quentin Skinner and the Relevance of Intellectual History," in *A Companion to Intellectual History*, ed. Richard Whatmore and Brian Young (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2016), 97–113; Gabrielle M. Spiegel, "History, Historicism, and the Social Logic of the Text," in *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 2006), 3–29;

time they were written, undermining as inherently anachronistic the idea that Tone should be seen as a ‘foreboder’ of nationalist sentiment, at least not in the eighteenth century sense. Where he did engage with ideas about the ‘nation’, he interpreted them in a civic sense and so he should not be seen as a romantic nationalist.

In order for this method to be used to best effect, part of the research process has involved consulting and comparing both unpublished and published variants of the same texts. The three volumes of Moody, McDowell, and Woods detail the vast majority of the discrepancies between the different versions and they are, on the whole, minor. These volumes are also acknowledged to provide accurate translations of non-English sources, such as some of Tone’s correspondence in France.¹²¹ However, to ensure the highest possible level of accuracy, the manuscript forms, which are largely held at Trinity College, have also been studied. The microfilms of the original copies of Tone’s diaries, in particular, are invaluable not least because they contain further notes and jottings which have been lost or overlooked in publication. From the various publications of Tone’s *Life* which are available, the original, edited by William Tone, is cited because it has shaped many of the historical interpretations which are being addressed. This is the case except where the passages have been removed; in these cases, Bartlett’s longer version is used.¹²²

Achieving these aims has inevitably presented a number of challenges. At a material level, some of Tone’s original papers were lost, presumably through ignorance of how significant they would become, by United Irishman Dr James Reynolds when they were left in his care in America by Matilda Tone.¹²³ The remaining documents, of which there is an abundance must be read with the caveat that some were undoubtedly written with the recipients in mind, notably Tone’s correspondence with French officials and his early Whig pamphlets. Several of his pamphlets are written under pseudonyms, which have previously been identified by Moody, McDowell, and Woods, who have also attributed several articles in the United Irish newspaper, *The Northern Star*, to Tone.¹²⁴

Mark Bevir, *The Logic of the History of Ideas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Anthony Pagden, “Rethinking the Linguistic Turn: Current Anxieties in Intellectual History,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 49, no. 3 (1988): 519–29.

¹²¹ Moody, McDowell, and Woods, *The Writings of Theobald Wolfe Tone, 1763-98: Tone’s Career in Ireland to June 1795*; Moody, McDowell, and Woods, *The Writings of Theobald Wolfe Tone, 1763-98: America, France and Bantry Bay, August 1795 to December 1796*; Moody, McDowell, and Woods, *The Writings of Theobald Wolfe Tone, 1763-98: France, the Rhine, Lough Swilly, and Death of Tone, January 1797 to November 1798*.

¹²² Tone, *Life*;

¹²³ Some of these were recovered and given to the American Irish Historical Society, but they are no longer available: Vincent O’Reilly, “Books from the Libraries of Theobald Wolfe Tone and William Sampson,” in *The Recorder: Bulletin of the American Irish Historical Society*, 3rd ed., vol. 2, 1924, 5–15.

¹²⁴ “Nimrod to the Gentlemen of the Down Hunt,” *Northern Star*, February 4, 1792; “Nimrod to the Gentlemen of the Down Hunt,” *Northern Star*, February 14, 1792; “X.Y. to the Editor of the Northern Star,” *Northern Star*, July 13, 1792; “X.Y. to the Editor of the Northern Star,” *Northern Star*, July 23, 1792; “X.Y. to the Editors of the Northern Star,” *Northern Star*, August 29, 1792; “To the Grand Jury of the City and County of Londonderry

Texts by ‘John Hutton’, ‘John Smith’, ‘a Liberty Boy’, and an ‘Independent Irish Whig’ have all been attributed to him and no evidence has been unearthed by this study to contradict that judgement.

Another difficulty in assessing Tone’s ideas is the need to separate them from those of the United Irishmen. Writing about the assumption that he was the sole founder of the Society, Elliott has commented that he was “just one of the founding team” and what is more “was no great initiator of ideas”.¹²⁵ Elliott does, however, note that “he coined the Society’s name and proclaimed its principles with the clarity which gave them such effectiveness”. Without wishing to overlook the role played by the likes of co-founder William Drennan (1754-1820), who was appointed chief scribe at their meetings, it is possible to assert that there are linguistic parallels between Tone’s writings and the early documents of the United Irishmen. Apart from the obvious suggestion that as a founder member and leader, Tone would have had played a crucial role in directing the Society’s ideas, their *Declarations and Resolutions*, which can be found in the Royal Irish Academy, bear striking similarity to his wording elsewhere.¹²⁶ For example, it describes no reform as “practicable, efficacious or just, which shall not include Irishmen of *every* religious persuasion”. Tone’s *Argument* makes the same case, that “no reform is honourable, practicable, efficacious or just, which does not include as a fundamental principle, the extension of elective franchise to the Roman Catholics”.¹²⁷ Thus, the United Irishmen’s *Declarations and Resolutions* are a good indication of Tone’s input into the Society’s early programme, gearing towards increased legislative independence, particularly as the document was not initially published, instead circulated privately among the Belfast radicals who agreed to its principles.

Tone’s political philosophy is perhaps best approached through his pamphlets and longer writings. The first of these came in 1788, with his memorandum on the Sandwich Islands.¹²⁸ The document, sent to Prime Minister William Pitt, outlined Tone’s plans for a military colony and represented his first attempt at constructing a work of utopia in the republican tradition.¹²⁹ This would be redrafted in

for the Summer Assizes,” *Northern Star*, August 11, 1792; “A Derry Farmer to the Editor of the Northern Star,” *Northern Star*, August 15, 1792; “John Keogh and Tone to the Friends of Peace and Harmony at Newry,” *Northern Star*, September 5, 1792; “Short Guide to the Constitution of America,” *Northern Star*, September 6, 1792.

¹²⁵ Elliott, *Wolfe Tone*, 119.

¹²⁶ “Declaration and Resolutions of the Society of United Irishmen of Belfast,” October 18, 1791, Charlemont Papers, MS 12/R/16, no. 81, Royal Irish Academy. Note that the October version is clearer in its aims than the document written in July.

¹²⁷ Wolfe Tone, “An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland” (Belfast: Society of United Irishmen, 1791), 12.

¹²⁸ Wolfe Tone, “Proposal Submitted to William Pitt for the Establishment of a Military Colony in the Sandwich Islands,” August 1788, Chatham papers, PRO 30/8/187, ff 254-259, Public Record Office, London.

¹²⁹ This literary tradition began with: Thomas More, *More: Utopia (1516)*, ed. George M. Logan, trans. Robert M. Adams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); James Harrington, *Harrington: “The*

1790, around the time when he was most literarily active. Between 1790-91, he wrote the majority of his most regularly cited works, including his *Review of the Conduct of Administration during the Seventh Session of Parliament*, a commentary on Irish Whig MPs who were attempting to earn the Dublin parliament greater power, a move he supported.¹³⁰ In the same year he mounted his first attack on the shortcomings of the 1782 constitution, with *Spanish War! An Enquiry How far Ireland is Bound, of Right, to Embark in the Impending Contest on the Side of Great Britain*.¹³¹ It argued that the Dublin parliament could not truly claim to enjoy any meaningful legislative independence if Ireland were forced to go to war with Spain alongside Great Britain over the Nootka crisis. Britain had refused to apologise for its ships encroaching on Spanish territory at Nootka in north America and was on the brink of war. Arguably Tone's most famous pamphlet came in 1791, with *An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland*.¹³² Tone's *Argument* has attracted much attention, even informing on occasion the tendency to overstate his role in securing later Catholic emancipation.¹³³ While other works, such as his personal correspondence, have been discussed in lesser detail, it is imperative to view his writings in their entirety, rather than in isolation, as only then can the progression of his ideas be understood. For a full list of Tone's published and unpublished political works, see Appendix A.

Organisation of the Thesis

This research will take a thematic approach to examining five separate but interlinked periods of Tone's life - the influences of the political scenes in Britain, Ireland, America, France, and in his final two years. The first two chapters will address Tone's early political career, first in his time in England, studying at Middle Temple, and upon his return to Ireland at the end of 1788, where he took up the campaign for increased Catholic representation and a dismantling of the penal laws, through petitioning for Catholic Relief Acts. It is worth reiterating at the outset that 'nationalism', the patriotic sentiment inspired by the organic growth of shared language and culture and inherited from German understandings of ethnic identity, as it would be understood in the nineteenth century, did not exist in

Commonwealth of Oceana" and *"A System of Politics,"* ed. J.G.A. Pocock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

¹³⁰ Wolfe Tone, "A Review of the Conduct of Administration during the Seventh Session of Parliament-Addressed to the Constitutional Electors and Free People of Ireland, on the Approaching Dissolution," in *The Writings of Theobald Wolfe Tone*, vol. I, 26-49.

¹³¹ Tone, "Spanish War! An Enquiry How Far Ireland Is Bound, of Right, to Embark in the Impending Contest on the Side of Great Britain" (Dublin: P. Byrne, June 30, 1790).

¹³² Tone, "An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland," (Belfast: Society of United Irishmen, 1791).

¹³³ de Blacam, *The Life Story of Wolfe Tone*, 9. De Blacam attempted, to some extent, to whitewash Tone's disdain for the Catholic Church, suggesting he attended mass while in France – in this passage, he refers to him as 'one of the founders of modern Catholic democracy'.

the same form during Tone's life.¹³⁴ Rather, he was operating in the era of a more embryonic national sentiment, shaped by more than a century of debates about Ireland's political destiny.

Chapter One will consider the ambiguities in the relationship between Britain and Ireland, particularly following the 1782 constitution and its moves towards legislative independence, and how this shaped Tone's early views. It will explore Tone's arguments for reforming the representative system to admit Catholics to the franchise, and to reduce British influence in Ireland by reducing the power of the Irish executive, thereby weakening the British executive given the intricate but complex relationship between the two. Moving into the 1790s, Tone's keen interest in the pamphlet wars between Edmund Burke and Paine, elucidating their contrasting responses to the French Revolution, will also be examined.¹³⁵ Chapter Two will address Tone's interpretation of Irish identity through an exploration of his ideas on the relationship between citizens and the nation. This will take into account his views on the paradox of Ireland's Catholics, the majority of the population, being excluded from voting in parliamentary elections or sitting in parliament and assess how this informed his arguments about the Irish government lacking legitimacy. It will also discuss Tone's early views on sectarianism and his travels to the north.

The middle section of the thesis, beginning with Chapter Three, will move into Tone's time in exile in America following his implication in the treason case against the radical Reverend William Jackson (1737-1795), who had travelled to Ireland to measure the people's appetite for revolution. It will seek to demonstrate that Tone's shift towards radicalism was rooted in intellectual influences rather than because of the circumstances of that affair. The parallel paths taken by the republican ideas of Tone and Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) – one of the United States' founding fathers – are yet to be navigated. Tone's time in Philadelphia is also of interest because of the influence of Locke in the early politics of the new United States, contrary to Elliott's assertion that relatively early on, he had "rejected Locke" and tacit consent as "essentially undemocratic".¹³⁶ A more sustained discussion of Tone's borrowings from Locke, particularly regarding property rights, is required. In the same way, it will be considered whether Tone was engrossed in financial debates, in spite of his lack of an overt economic programme, not least because of the financial revolution and the ongoing eighteenth-

¹³⁴ On the origins of Irish nationalism, see: David Dwan, "Romantic Nationalism: History and Illusion in Ireland," *Modern Intellectual History* 14, no. 3 (2017): 717–45; English, "Ireland Before 1800 - 'Rational Ideas of Liberty and Equality': The Eighteenth Century"; Shane Nagle, *Histories of Nationalism in Ireland and Germany: A Comparative Study from 1800 to 1932* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017), 13–43. For a discussion of the complex nature of nineteenth-century nationalism, including the contrast between German-inspired ethnic nationalism and French-inspired civic nationalism, see Paul Lawrence, *Nationalism: History and Theory* (Pearson Education, 2005), 61; Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism* (London: Routledge, 2013), 212.

¹³⁵ Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (London: J. Dodsley, 1790); Thomas Paine, *The Rights of Man: Being an Answer to Mr Burke's Attack on the French Revolution*, Seven (London: J.S. Jordan, 1791).

¹³⁶ Elliott, *Wolfe Tone*, 85.

century discussions about state debt. Whereas Irish Patriots before him had been very much concerned with economic issues, Tone did not begin to properly articulate these ideas until his time in America, as the focus of his writings while in Ireland and Britain was on reform of the representative system and Catholic relief.

Chapter Four will then focus on his relationship with France, where he headed in 1796 after his time in America. This will be separated into his understanding of the ideas of the French Revolution, before discussing his reception of the events of 1789 onwards, and finally noting his personal links with members of the Directory and French military. The final chapter will focus on the final two years of his life prior to his suicide in Provost's Prison, Dublin, in November 1798, paying particular attention to the rebellion of that year. Given that he spent so little of that year in Ireland, and he was not directly involved in much of the rebellion itself, it is curious that he has become so readily associated with the insurrection. In their discussion of the events of 1798 in Ireland, scholars have focused largely on the rebellion itself, rather than the ideas behind it.¹³⁷ Tone's isolation from the rebellion as it unfolded has meant his interpretation of events has largely been gauged from his final speech at his trial, despite other resources and considerations providing room for further discussion on the subject.¹³⁸

With Tone continuing to occupy such an important place in Irish national history, it is vital to pay close attention to his political ideas. This dissertation strives to highlight elements of his thinking that have been overlooked or given insufficient attention. At the same time, it provides a window into the nuances of eighteenth-century republicanism, both in Ireland and in the circles Tone mixed in farther afield. Despite the propensity to categorise him as an intellectual product of the French Revolution or, in the case of more nuanced approaches, a combined product of the French and Irish political scenes, the reality was more complex. It is this imbalance that this thesis seeks to address.

¹³⁷ Daniel Gahan, *Rebellion! Ireland in 1798* (Dublin: O'Brien Press, 1997); Daniel Gahan, *The People's Rising: The Great Wexford Rebellion of 1798* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1995); Daniel Gahan, "Class, Religion and Rebellion: Wexford in 1798," in *Revolution, Counter-Revolution and Union: Ireland in the 1790s*, ed. Jim Smyth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 83–99; Thomas Pakenham, *The Year of Liberty: The Great Irish Rebellion of 1798* (London: Times Books, 1969); Kenneth L. Campbell, *Ireland's History: Prehistory to the Present* (London and New York: A & C Black, 2013); Chris Lawlor, *The Massacre on Dunlavin Green: A Story of the 1798 Rebellion* (Dublin: Dillons Only, 1998); Thomas Bartlett et al., *The 1798 Rebellion: A Bicentennial Perspective* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1999); L.M. Cullen, "The 1798 Rebellion in Wexford: United Irishman Organisation, Membership, Leadership," in *Wexford: History and Society: Interdisciplinary Essays on the History of an Irish County*, ed. Kevin Whelan (Dublin: Geography Publications, 1987), 248–95; Póirtéir, ed., *The Great Irish Rebellion of 1798*; Jim Smyth, "Introduction: The 1798 Rebellion in Its Eighteenth-Century Contexts," in *Revolution, Counter-Revolution and Union: Ireland in the 1790s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1–21.

¹³⁸ "Tone's Address to the Court Martial," November 10, 1798, HO 100/79, ff 96-97, Public Record Office.

Chapter One: Wolfe Tone, Britain, and Parliamentary Reform

The early years of Tone's political development were shaped by debates surrounding the complex constitutional relationship between Ireland and Great Britain. To better understand Britain's political culture at the time Tone arrived in London in 1787, it is necessary to explore how the events of the preceding century had defined relations between Britain and Ireland. In the eighteenth century, British politics was largely understood through the prism of the 1688 Glorious Revolution.¹³⁹ The overthrow of James II, the Catholic king of England, and his replacement by his Protestant daughter Mary and her husband William of Orange, had important ramifications for the status of the English parliament. MPs seized the opportunity presented by the vacancy on the throne following James II fleeing London to curtail the powers of the monarch, offering William and Mary the chance to rule as joint sovereigns under the 1689 Bill of Rights.¹⁴⁰ Its impact was still felt in the late eighteenth century, as the Glorious Revolution had prompted debates about sovereignty and contract theories of government. These debates about the relationship between the Crown and parliament continued for decades.

The Glorious Revolution was also an important reference point in late eighteenth-century debates in Ireland.¹⁴¹ Shaped by the Williamite-Jacobite War of 1689-91, the Irish experience of the Revolution was markedly different to that of Britain.¹⁴² William's succession had proved a crucial step towards securing Protestant interests in Ireland, the decisive moment of the war coming at the Battle of

¹³⁹ For an overview of how the Glorious Revolution shaped debates about the nature of governments, see: John Miller, "The Post-Revolution Order," in *The Glorious Revolution* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 47–101; Gary Cox, "Was the Glorious Revolution a Constitutional Watershed?," *The Journal of Economic History* 72, no. 3 (2012): 567–600; Gary Cox, "War, Moral Hazard, and Ministerial Responsibility: England After the Glorious Revolution," *The Journal of Economic History* 71, no. 1 (2011): 133–61; Richard S. Kay, "The Contested Constitution," in *The Glorious Revolution and the Continuity of Law* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2014), 13–55; R Eccleshall, "Anglican Political Thought in the Century After the Revolution of 1688," in *Political Thought in Ireland Since the Seventeenth Century*, ed. D.G Boyce, R Eccleshall, and V Geoghegan (Basingstoke: Routledge, 2008)

¹⁴⁰ "The Bill of Rights 1689: An Act Declaring the Rights and Liberties of the Subject, and Settling the Succession of the Crown.," December 1689, HL/PO/PU/1/1688/1W&Ms2n2, Parliamentary Archives. As an example of its limitations on the Crown, the Bill declared that 'the pretended power of suspending the laws and dispensing with laws by regal authority without consent of Parliament is illegal.'

¹⁴¹ D.W. Hayton, "The Williamite Revolution in Ireland, 1688-91," in *The Anglo-Dutch Moment: Essays on the Glorious Revolution and Its World Impact*, ed. Jonathan I Israel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 185–215; David Armitage, "The Political Economy of Britain and Ireland after the Glorious Revolution," in *Political Thought in Seventeenth-Century Ireland: Kingdom or Colony*, ed. Jane Ohlmeyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 221–44.

¹⁴² John Childs, "The Williamite War, 1689-91," in *A Military History of Ireland*, ed. Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffery (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 188–211; Éamonn Ó Ciardha, *Ireland and the Jacobite Cause, 1685-1766: A Fatal Attachment* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002) ; Patrick Kelly, "Ireland and the Glorious Revolution: From Kingdom to Colony," in *The Revolutions of 1688: The Andrew Browning Lectures 1988*, ed. Robert Beddard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 163–90.

Aughrim on July 12, 1691.¹⁴³ A series of notable milestones followed which served to crush the Catholic interest. Catholics were no longer allowed to sit in the Irish parliament and Williamite power was consolidated by seizing the land of Jacobites who had fled for France following the end of the war, in accordance with the Treaty of Limerick.¹⁴⁴ The relationship between England and Ireland also changed from a constitutional point of view. In the aftermath of the war, the Westminster parliament sought to assert more authority over its Irish counterpart. This was partly the result of the increased influence English MPs came to have over the composition of the English Privy Council in the wake of the Revolution, and in turn the more important role they now possessed in appointing members of the Irish executive, controlling crucial ministerial appointments such as that of the Irish Lord Lieutenant. In the 1690s, Irish MPs also sought to expand their influence, particularly their role in preparing supply legislation. As a result, they clashed with the English privy council and Westminster assembly on a number of issues relating to Poynings's Law. The legislation had proved a point of contention on numerous occasions, not least in the 1692 standoff when the Commons had tried to claim the 'sole right' to prepare supply bills for raising money. There was significant discomfort among Irish MPs over Westminster's attempts to legislate directly for the kingdom, having witnessed a series of restrictions on Irish trade, including bans on the import of Irish cattle in the 1660s and, after the consequent rise of the Irish wool trade, the prohibition of Irish wool exports in 1699.¹⁴⁵ It was in this climate that an Irish 'patriot' interest began to emerge, whose key concerns were removing restrictions which had been placed on the Irish parliament by measures such as Poynings's Law and the Declaratory Act. Earlier in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Protestant patriot authors such as William Molyneux, Jonathan Swift, and Charles Lucas had all criticised the unfair relationship between the two parliaments at Westminster and Dublin.¹⁴⁶

By the early 1780s, the Patriot movement had gathered sufficient momentum to engineer the events of 'Grattan's Parliament' and its biggest achievement, the 1782 Constitution, which had achieved a

¹⁴³ John Childs, "Aughrim and Galway," in *The Williamite Wars in Ireland* (London: A & C Black, 2007), 329–47.

¹⁴⁴ John Gerald Simms, *The Williamite Confiscation in Ireland: 1690-1703* (London: Faber & Faber, 1956), 121–27; Patrick Walsh, "'A Cunning Intriguing Spark' - Conolly and the Williamite Confiscation 1690-1703," in *The Making of the Irish Protestant Ascendancy: The Life of William Conolly, 1662-1729* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2010), 43–61.

¹⁴⁵ Julian Hoppit, *Britain's Political Economies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 217–25.

¹⁴⁶ William Molyneux, *The Case of Ireland's Being Bound by Acts of Parliament in England, Stated* (London: J. Almon, 1698); Jonathan Swift, *A Modest Proposal [1729] and Other Prose*, ed. Lewis C. Daly (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2004); Jonathan Swift, *A Tale of a Tub [1704]* (Dublin: G. Faulkner, 1771); Jonathan Swift, *Drapier's Letters (1724-5)*, ed. Herbert Davis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1935); Charles Lucas, *A Remonstrance Against Certain Infringements on the Rights and Liberties of the Commons and Citizens of Dublin* (Dublin, n.p. 1743); Charles Lucas, *Divelina Libera: An Apology for the Civil Rights and Liberties of the Commons and Citizens of Dublin* (Dublin: James, Esdall, 1744); Charles Lucas, *The Political Constitutions of Great Britain and Ireland: Asserted and Vindicated; the Connection, and Common Interest of Both Kingdoms Demonstrated; and the Grievances Which Each, and More Especially the Later, Has Suffered, Set Forth in Several Addresses and Letters to the Free-Citizens of Dublin* (Dublin: Henry Holmes 1751).

degree of legislative independence for Ireland. Grattan's parliament saw the repeal of the Declaratory act and modification of Poynings's Law. However, other grievances remained, notably concerns about the representative system (who should have the right to vote and how constituencies were distributed) and remaining elements of anti-Catholic legislation.¹⁴⁷ Irish Whigs were generally advocating self-government within the structure of the British Empire, yet an increasingly radical minority took issue with the limitations of the new 'constitution'. Mirroring similar reform movements in Britain who were debating the level of parliament's power, these issues became the focus of a number of extra-parliamentary reform groups, such as the Catholic Committees, from the 1760s onwards. As Tone's early pamphlets will show, he continued a literary tradition of 'patriot' opposition to restrictions on the Irish parliament, a sentiment found in the works of prominent Protestant writers Molyneux, Swift, and Lucas, who had opposed measures such as the Wool Act (1699) and the introduction of Wood's half-pence (1722), as will be discussed later in the chapter in relation to the 1782 Constitution.¹⁴⁸ Tone's pamphlets also showed that he was not content with the 1782 Constitution or its failure to properly address Catholic Ireland's lack of political representation, something which had not been rectified by the recent changes to both the British and Irish constitutional relationship.

The various strands of Irish thought with which Tone was engaging in these pamphlets can be split broadly, as Small has done, into 'patriotism', 'radicalism', and 'republicanism'.¹⁴⁹ At different points of his life, Tone himself could be cast into all three of those categories as his views evolved. Small suggests that patriotism, radicalism, and republicanism, all ultimately stemmed from the five issues of "Protestant superiority, ancient constitutionalism, commercial grievance, classical republicanism, and natural rights".¹⁵⁰ That is to say, that opposition to the political status quo was borne of historical examples of republican models, as well as the Whig myth of the gothic constitution and more contemporary debates around individual liberty.¹⁵¹ The appeal of these ideas was heightened by

¹⁴⁷ On the failings of the 1782 constitution, see: Nancy Curtin, "'A Perfect Liberty': The Rise and Fall of the Irish Whigs, 1789-1797," in *Political Discourse in Seventeenth-and Eighteenth-Century*, 271. Mansergh, *Grattan's Failure: Parliamentary Opposition and the People of Ireland 1779-1800*. Gerard O'Brien, *Anglo-Irish Politics in the Age of Grattan and Pitt* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1987). Bartlett, "The Burden of the Present: Theobald Wolfe Tone, Republican and Separatist," 1993.

¹⁴⁸ Molyneux, *The Case of Ireland's Being Bound by Acts of Parliament in England, Stated*; Swift, *A Modest Proposal [1729] and Other Prose*; Swift, *A Tale of a Tub [1704]*; Lucas, *A Remonstrance Against Certain Infringements on the Rights and Liberties of the Commons and Citizens of Dublin*; Lucas, *Divelina Libera: An Apology for the Civil Rights and Liberties of the Commons and Citizens of Dublin*; Lucas, *The Political Constitutions of Great Britain and Ireland: Asserted and Vindicated; the Connection, and Common Interest of Both Kingdoms Demonstrated; and the Grievances Which Each, and More Especially the Later, Has Suffered, Set Forth in Several Addresses and Letters to the Free-Citizens of Dublin*.

¹⁴⁹ Stephen Small, *Political Thought in Ireland 1776-1798: Republicanism, Patriotism, and Radicalism*, 1.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 1-2.

¹⁵¹ Burke, among other Whigs, believed the existing constitution could be justified by its historical roots. J.G.A. Pocock, "Burke and the Ancient Constitution - A Problem in the History of Ideas," *The Historical Journal* 3, no. 2 (1960): 125-43.

economic and social issues, in particular the disproportionate influence of Protestants in land ownership and law-making, and gained new momentum after 1789 and the advent of the French Revolution. This was reflected in the respective arguments of Burke and Paine, as will be discussed towards the end of the chapter.¹⁵²

Despite the likely impact of his formative years on Tone's later development, few historians have discussed the time he spent studying in Britain in much detail. Elliott approaches the matter from a biographical perspective, giving a lengthy account of how he spent his time there – drinking, and otherwise struggling with boredom.¹⁵³ Yet, intriguingly, this account also suggests that “he had little interest in English affairs”, while also recognising that he made regular visits to the House of Commons.¹⁵⁴ It is a point of interest, and indeed importance in understanding Tone's early years, whether he truly lacked interest in British politics. As this chapter will demonstrate, he regularly engaged with British debates and was well-informed about the country's political culture, even if this was chiefly borne of an interest in how these matters affected Ireland.

The purpose of this chapter is firstly, to contextualise Tone's two years in London between 1787-89 where we first find evidence of his developing political ideas and secondly, to examine his views on parliamentary and constitutional reform. This will be achieved by looking at his writings during and shortly after his studies in England. Tone's writings addressed matters such as whether Irishmen were being adequately represented in the Dublin parliament, if Ireland should have more control over its foreign policy, and whether the Irish government embodied the necessary republican characteristics of virtue and wisdom. The chapter will also consider Tone's hopes for reform in Ireland based on the shortcomings of the 1782 Constitution. It will weigh up the elements of ancient republican thinking in his writings against seventeenth- and eighteenth-century British influences, from Locke to the debates of Paine and Burke in the 1790s. The overall focus will be the period of 1788-1792, though later events, such as his dealings with Paine in Paris in 1797, will be discussed where relevant.

Tone's early career

According to records at Middle Temple, Tone spent almost two years in London, from 1787 until the end of 1788, initially training as a lawyer.¹⁵⁵ This period included trips back to Dublin, where he

¹⁵² Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*; Paine, *The Rights of Man: Being an Answer to Mr Burke's Attack on the French Revolution*.

¹⁵³ Elliott, *Wolfe Tone*, 42–91.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 45.

¹⁵⁵ Record of Tone's admission to the Middle Temple, 3 February 1787 – Middle Temple, London, Admissions Register, i, 338, T.W Moody, R.B McDowell, and C.J Woods, eds., *The Writings of Theobald Wolfe Tone, 1763-98: Tone's Career in Ireland to June 1795*, vol. I, 5.

attended engagements at the university.¹⁵⁶ Biographical accounts have remarked that on a personal level, this was a tumultuous time for Tone.¹⁵⁷ His father, Peter Tone, suffered bankruptcy, while his own marriage to Matilda and the arrival of their first daughter all spurred his career ambitions. These very human factors shaped his time in Britain. However, it has been less often remarked that Tone's time in London was also marked by important political developments.¹⁵⁸ Britain was readjusting to a new landscape following the American War of Independence and was no longer able to utilise its North American colonies. Then, from October 1788-February of the next year, the deteriorating health of George III had opened the door to new debates about the extent to which parliament could intervene when the regent appeared unable to rule. The crisis heavily affected British political culture and reignited discussion about the power of Westminster. The following year would bring even greater challenges, with 1789 defined by Europe-wide uncertainty brought about by the early, but dramatic, stages of the French Revolution. All these events raised important constitutional issues in Britain. For an Irishman living in London, these constitutional questions were not taking place in a vacuum – Tone was also keenly aware of their implications for Irish political affairs. It should therefore not come as a surprise that they shaped his early political writings.

The first of his writings which is dated to his time in England was a chapter in a burlesque novel, written alongside Richard Jebb and John Radcliffe, two of his friends from Trinity College Dublin. Entitled '*Belmont Castle; or suffering sensibility*', the text was written in 1788 but was not published until 1790, when it was printed by Patrick Byrne.¹⁵⁹ While its content does not suggest any tangible political involvement from Tone at this stage, Byrne would go on to print some of Tone's radical works, himself becoming part of the Dublin Society of United Irishmen. In 1788, Tone also wrote to British Prime Minister William Pitt, proposing a military colony in the Sandwich Islands, perhaps in the hopes of ingratiating himself with the British political establishment, or even carving out a career; this text is illuminative of his views on national identity and as such, will be explored in the next chapter.

While he was yet to publish anything on political affairs, during his time in England Tone was already beginning to make a direct link between British government policy and social conditions in Ireland. In 1789 after his return to Ireland, he had written what Moody, McDowell, and Woods identify as a 'Short Memoranda on Legal Matters', though the manuscript comprises handwritten notes and did not

¹⁵⁶ "Record of Tone Being Commenced LL.B. in the University of Dublin on 24 February 1789," May 19, 1789, Register of Degrees, MUN/v/10/1, Trinity College Dublin.

¹⁵⁷ Boylan, *Wolfe Tone*, 10; Elliott, *Wolfe Tone*, 69.

¹⁵⁸ Both Boylan and Elliott, in the passages cited above, relate the personal circumstances of Tone's time there without focusing on the implications of wider political affairs on his development.

¹⁵⁹ Wolfe Tone, Richard Jebb, and John Radcliffe, "Chapter by Tone in Belmont Castle; or Suffering Sensibility (1788)," in *The Writings of Theobald Wolfe Tone, 1763-98: Tone's Career in Ireland to June 1795*, vol. I.

consist of a complete text.¹⁶⁰ These notes are valuable nonetheless, as his foray into writing about land law, discussing the relations between landlords and tenants in Ireland, saw him move further towards publishing his views on political matters. He was quickly becoming disenchanted with his prospective career in law, which may explain why he was drawn towards the political sphere. This was certainly not an unusual move for a man of his background and status. “As the law grew every day more and more disgusting, to which my want of success contributed,” he later reflected in his memoirs, “I turned my attention to politics, and, as one or two of my friends had written pamphlets with success, I determined to try my hand on a pamphlet”.¹⁶¹ The pamphlet in question, which he hoped would be well-received in high-profile political circles, was *A Review of the Conduct of Administration during the Seventh Session of Parliament* (1790), which focused on the alarming activities of the Irish parliament.¹⁶² In it, he argued that under the current system, Irish MPs were failing to legislate in a balanced way and were wrongly aligning themselves with the faction of British Whigs led by Charles James Fox. Many of these MPs viewed Foxite Whigs as the most similar to themselves in terms of broader philosophy. Tone, however, felt they would have been better served reflecting the public interest in Ireland as demand for increased legislative freedom grew, instead of siding with either divide in Britain - hence, he identified himself by signing off the document as an ‘independent’ Whig.

Tone returned to Dublin at the end of 1788 and began to follow the Irish Whigs closely, attending the public gallery in parliament.¹⁶³ They attracted his interest as the first real tangible opposition that had emerged since 1782 to the way the Irish executive was dominating the Irish House of Commons and exploiting the deficiencies of the representative system. Upon his return, Tone would write several works in which he further developed his political ideas. His next significant publication on political matters from the period examined in this chapter was *Spanish War! An Enquiry How far Ireland is Bound, of Right, to Embark in the Impending Contest on the Side of Great Britain* (1790), prompted by a dispute between Britain and Spain over the strategically important Nootka Sound a month earlier.¹⁶⁴ He argued against Ireland participating in the conflict on the basis that 1782 had supposedly achieved legislative independence, and that it was not in Ireland’s interests because of the financial burden and potential loss of life.

A year later, he would publish one of his most well-known pieces, *An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland*, shortly before joining the Catholic Committee to campaign for further Catholic

¹⁶⁰ Wolfe Tone, “Short Memoranda on Legal Matters,” 1789, Tone Papers, MS 3805, f. 6, Trinity College Dublin.

¹⁶¹ Tone, *Life*, 30.

¹⁶² Tone, *A Review*, 49.

¹⁶³ Tone references his visits to the Commons in: Tone, *Life*, 57.

¹⁶⁴ Tone, *Spanish War!*

Relief bills.¹⁶⁵ The organisation had been established several decades earlier with the aim of rescinding some of the restrictions on Catholic rights, such as the prohibition on Catholics inheriting property. Tone's pamphlet picked apart Protestant arguments against giving Catholics the vote, such as their lack of education or unwillingness to keep oaths, combining Patriot arguments about the Irish deserving more of a political voice with a Paineite emphasis on individual rights. The latter strand of thought is also evident in his lengthy but unpublished 1792 Reply to the Protestant Interest in Ireland Ascertained.¹⁶⁶ In an attempt to address disproportionate Protestant power, he again reflected on the common justifications for denying Catholics their part in the franchise. He notes a "prejudice against recent opinions" from the unknown author of the original pamphlet (*The Protestant Interest in Ireland Ascertained*), who seemed hesitant of "universal, unrestricted liberty, toleration and the rights of man".¹⁶⁷

In the writings briefly outlined above, the predominant theme is his questioning of British influence over Irish affairs and the authority of the British legislature over Ireland. This was inspired by a number of factors, particularly the regency crisis, the government's patronage in the Irish House of Commons, and the lack of progress in Irish parliamentary reform that might have addressed problems with the representative system. He noted that in the wake of 1782, Ireland could not establish its own foreign policy, did not have sufficient freedom in economic policy, and was yet to improve Catholic representation. Tone's analysis of British and Irish politics, as found in *A Review* and *Spanish War!*, outlined how the Irish parliament might address these problems, using classical republican themes of virtue and common good to explain how the Irish parliament could, at least in theory, serve the interests of its people. Having established the primary materials that can be traced to Tone in the period of 1788-92 the remainder of the chapter will delve further into the republican ideas in these texts, and how these ideas were informed by debates on parliamentary reform in Britain and Ireland.

The constitutional question (1789-91): Tone's Review of the Conduct of the Administration (1790)

Tone first began to examine the inherent problems of the connection between Britain and Ireland in his 'Review of the Conduct of Administration'.¹⁶⁸ This document analyses links between Britain and

¹⁶⁵ Tone, "An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland," 1791.

¹⁶⁶ Wolfe Tone, "Reply to a Pamphlet Entitled 'The Protestant Interest in Ireland Ascertained', January 1792," in *The Writings of Theobald Wolfe Tone, 1763-98: Tone's Career in Ireland to June 1795*, vol. I; 164-82; *To Every Moderate Man in Ireland...: The Protestant Interest in Ireland Ascertained. Signed, "A Protestant"* (Dublin: Richard White, 1792). The original publication appears no longer to be in existence.

¹⁶⁷ Tone, "Reply to a Pamphlet Entitled 'The Protestant Interest in Ireland Ascertained', January 1792," 165.

¹⁶⁸ Tone, *A Review*.

Ireland, arguing against the Irish government promoting a legislative programme that reflected British interests, and against Irish MPs cooperating with such a system by supporting government bills. Not only were MPs susceptible to bribery, the excessive patronage in the hands of the executive and the Crown meant a small, select interest was maintained in the Dublin parliament and it became difficult to displace long-standing politicians who were easily swayed to follow British interests even after 1782.¹⁶⁹ The Irish government was able to ensure support for its measures by granting influential MPs important positions and financial incentives. Meanwhile, Dublin Castle aimed to increase its influence by inventing new peerages and offices to deal with domestic issues, but the opening of these new positions had further fed corruption. Tone's publication supported Irish Whig attempts to secure greater power for the Dublin parliament to sign off their own bills, giving one of the first indications of a combination of civic humanist and Lockean influence on Tone's thinking. For instance, he argued the Irish population could not consent to the existing structures of government, he argued, when their measures did not reflect "national wisdom" or the "national spirit", republican values which were based on the Roman model of a collective who shaped the nation via positive characteristics.¹⁷⁰ Indeed, echoing Locke on the accountability of government, he added that governments could not be unanswerable to the opposition "unless it appear that the opposition and the people are of different sentiments", alluding to the Irish government requiring popular support in light of attacks on the Dublin parliament from reformers during its seventh session, which had commenced on January 21, 1790 and concluded on April 5, 1790.¹⁷¹

The Irish parliament had tried to reaffirm its position as at least a partially independent body in light of the regency crisis. As the health of George III worsened from November 1788, the out-of-power Whigs – particularly in the wing of the party led by Fox – sensed the chance to cash in on their links to the king's eldest son, George, Prince of Wales, who it was presumed would take over in the event of abdication.¹⁷² Fox was, at this time, Prime Minister William Pitt's leading rival and hoped to use the crisis both to gain power and exploit constitutional questions. In a stark contravention of his wider political philosophy, Fox defended the right of the regent to take power, with Pitt arguing on the contrary that this could only take place if parliament laid out specific conditions, and that the Prince should have strictly restricted powers.¹⁷³ In *A Review*, Tone quoted long passages from the seventh

¹⁶⁹ Martyn J Powell, "The Reform of the Undertaker System: Anglo-Irish Politics, 1750-67," *Irish Historical Studies* 31, no. 121 (May 1998): 19–36; Hayton, *Ruling Ireland, 1685-1742: Politics, Politicians and Parties*, 210–75; Connolly, *Divided Kingdom: Ireland 1630-1800*, 218–25.

¹⁷⁰ Tone, *A Review*, 28.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² Derry, *The Regency Crisis and the Whigs, 1788-9*. Poole, "Monarchy and the Policing of Insanity." Derry, *Politics in the Age of Fox, Pitt and Liverpool: Continuity and Transformation*, 63–68.

¹⁷³ On Fox's ideas about parliamentary reform, see: Leslie George Mitchell, *Charles James Fox and the Disintegration of the Whig Party, 1782-1794* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971); Goodwin, "The Influence of the French Revolution on the Movement for Parliamentary Reform and on the Evolution of British

session of the parliament in early 1790. The colourful debates of the seventh session had centred on the regency crisis, Ireland's politicians meeting at a time when a bill was passing through the Westminster parliament to make the Prince of Wales regent of Great Britain - though the issue of the regent of Ireland remained a separate matter. The debates resulted in a new impetus for the Irish Whigs, who wanted the Prince of Wales installed, and led to the Irish parliament moving to inform British MPs of their support for the prince regent.

It was in this climate that Tone questioned existing legislation that had placed limitations on the Irish parliament during the regency crisis, asking whether the Great Seal could still be used to rubberstamp legislation in the king's absence. Tone also questioned the Chief Baron's Act, a law which had stipulated that bills must be passed by both Irish houses of parliament before reaching England for approval. This Act had renewed significance amidst the regency crisis. With the king believed to be unfit to rule, the Attorney General of Britain had pointed out in the Westminster parliament that under normal circumstances, bills could not be passed without the Great Seal of England, which was used to affirm the monarch's approval. In this case, the Westminster Parliament was "affixing the Great Seal to a Bill determining who should be Regent", thus undermining the entire system.¹⁷⁴ Tone agreed with the Attorney General that the Great Seal was safe in the hands of the King, but "in any other [hands] a poisonous viper to the constitution", making little attempt to veil his attack on the Westminster parliament. He acknowledged in the same publication that the Great Seal "appears to me not to be a thing but a sign" – it was "not the supreme power" itself, but "merely an instrument used".¹⁷⁵ Only the king ought to have been allowed to approve legislation affecting Ireland, not Westminster, as the seal did not hold any power itself and was simply an instrument used to signify royal approval. Defending the king's powers was therefore a means of restating Dublin's freedom of action from Westminster, similar to the position of the Irish Whigs.

It was not the king's health in itself which concerned Tone, but the British parliament's response to it. He notes, for instance, a "total and utter difference of sentiment ... between the two Houses of Parliament and the Marquis of Buckingham", the latter executive having been appointed in Britain by Pitt and was therefore not necessarily in tune with the legislature.¹⁷⁶ George Nugent-Temple-Grenville, the first Marquis of Buckingham, had been Lord Lieutenant of Ireland since the mid-1780s and was unpopular among many Irish MPs because of well-known corrupt practices which he used to consolidate his position. This "difference of sentiments", and the fact the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland

Working-Class Radicalism"; Martyn J Powell, "Charles James Fox and Ireland," *Irish Historical Studies* 33, no. 130 (November 2002): 169–90.

¹⁷⁴ Tone, *A Review*, 31.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 30.

had such control over appointing ministers, was a widespread problem dating back decades that inspired many Patriots to demand reform. Amidst the debates over the king's status in the Irish parliament, Buckingham prompted outrage – as voiced by Grattan – by refusing to give Westminster an address on behalf of the Irish Houses of Parliament which made it known that they supported the Prince of Wales becoming regent.¹⁷⁷ While Tone had not agreed with Irish MPs actively aligning themselves with Fox's Whigs, that was more as a matter of principle against their allegiance with British political figures, rather than because he opposed their views in favour of the Prince of Wales.

The Marquis of Buckingham's refusal to voice the views of the Irish Parliament was a further reminder that the British administration viewed their relationship with Dublin as a one-way system of control. The Irish parliament had sent a delegation to London with the aim of asking the prince to become regent of Ireland, though the mission proved too late as the king had by then recovered his health. Buckingham's decision to act against the wishes of the Irish parliament, and his attitude towards what he called the 'regency rats', created resentment and further fuelled calls for political reform, particularly as he occupied such a powerful position.¹⁷⁸ At the same time, it led to concerns among British MPs about the state of the connection with Ireland if the Irish parliament felt they were able to contradict Westminster's wishes, the formal position of Pitt's government having been that at most, the parliament would oversee the transition of power to the new regent and the monarch would subsequently have limits placed on his powers.¹⁷⁹ Thus, Tone's responses to the regency crisis provided an insight into his motives behind demanding increased political independence for Ireland. While the existing systems could work in theory, the reality was that corruption and more importantly, the complexities of the king's relationship with parliament meant Dublin could not work effectively alongside Westminster to resolve the issue.

The regency crisis had triggered passionate debates about the very principles of Britain's system of government. It also prompted the foundation of the Whig Club of Ireland in 1789, a group that advocated moderate reform of the parliamentary system to allow greater legislative freedom for the Dublin parliament. Much to Tone's frustration, they aligned themselves with Fox in English politics, in an attempt to gain greater legislative freedom in line with Foxite views on parliamentary power.¹⁸⁰ Tone's opposition to this alignment, however, should not be taken to mean that he was entirely against Fox's ideas, which included favouring the rapid change of the French Revolution (which Fox

¹⁷⁷ Henry Grattan, "Address to the Marquis of Buckingham (1789)," in *Speeches of the Right Hon. Henry Grattan: With Prefatory Observations*, vol. I (Eastburn, Kirk & Company, 1813), 308–36. Herman, "Henry Grattan, the Regency Crisis and the Emergence of a Whig Party in Ireland, 1788–9."

¹⁷⁸ Bartlett, *Ireland: A History*, 198–99.

¹⁷⁹ Brown, *The Irish Enlightenment*, 410.

¹⁸⁰ Douglas Kanter, *The Making of British Unionism, 1740–1848: Politics, Government, and the Anglo-Irish Constitutional Relationship* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2009), 64.

believed was an imitation of the Glorious Revolution), advocating an entirely new constitution, or supporting the Prince of Wales to become regent.¹⁸¹ Instead, Tone disapproved of the Whig club relying on “remote and contingent and suspicious aid from abroad” in the form of their “attachment to Charles James Fox”, which he considered a “great error”.¹⁸² This positions Tone’s thinking as relatively unusual compared to large elements of the Irish Whigs, who saw the regency crisis as an opportunity to assert the newfound authority of the Irish parliament. Tone, on the contrary, maintained the stance of many earlier eighteenth century Patriot writers, believing Irish politicians should only willingly connect themselves to British parties if it was an “indispensable necessity”, when in reality “whether it be essential, or even necessary, to a party here to be connected with a party in England is a point much to be doubted”.¹⁸³ By the late 1780s and early 1790s, this was in contradiction with the political programme of a significant portion of Whigs in Ireland.

If 1782 had ostensibly brought limited legislative independence, it also exposed the ambiguities that characterized Ireland’s relationship with Britain. The prevalence and prominence of English ministers who could sit in the Dublin parliament to maintain political and economic interests in Ireland, as well as the corruption of some Irish MPs who engaged in bribery to maintain their positions, all meant that the power of the Irish parliament was still very limited.¹⁸⁴ Even in the king’s absence, British influence was still felt through the arm of the Lord Lieutenant, who served as his representative, and who had been appointed by the British administration, in turn controlling many of the appointments to the Irish parliament. Tone’s *Review* addressed confusion over who held ultimate authority in both Britain and Ireland “when the vast machine of Government was in pieces”.¹⁸⁵ The Irish parliament could not simply act independently of what was happening in Britain due to legislation such as the Chief Baron’s Act, or Yelverton’s Act, which had modified Poyning’s Law so that only bills passed by both Irish houses of parliament would be sent to England to be approved; the likelihood of both houses passing legislation contrary to the British interest in Ireland was limited because so many

¹⁸¹ Gregory Claeys, “Varieties of Whiggism: Fox, Sheridan and the Whig Party, 1791-3,” in *French Revolution Debate in Britain: The Origins of Modern Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 99–118.

¹⁸² Tone, “A Review of the Conduct of Administration during the Seventh Session of Parliament- Addressed to the Constitutional Electors and Free People of Ireland, on the Approaching Dissolution,” 28.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.* 29.

¹⁸⁴ While bribery was a common, often unquestioned practice, patronage was the most significant way in which the English administration maintained influence over the Dublin parliament. The ‘undertaker system’, as referenced earlier in this chapter, allowed landed families to cast influence through reliable agents, in the process creating small factions who could be relied upon by the English government to vote favourably. These borough patrons ensured a government majority on key issues. See: Frank O’Gorman, “Whiggism Supreme, 1714-1757,” in *The Long Eighteenth Century: British Political and Social History 1688-1832* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016); David Hayton, “The Beginnings of the ‘Undertaker System,’” in *Ruling Ireland, 1685-1742: Politics, Politicians and Parties*, 2004, 106–31. David Hayton, “Voters, Patrons and Parties: Parliamentary Elections in Ireland, c. 1692–1727,” in *Partisan Politics, Principle and Reform in Parliament in the Constituencies, 1689-1880*, ed. Clyve Jones, Philip Salmon, and Richard Davis (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 43–70.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 33.

members were either in the pay of, or at least under the influence of, the Lord Lieutenant and thereby the British executive.

The inevitable consequence of this system was that the Irish government was less inclined to pass legislation in the interests of the Irish people, as opposed to the interests of the British executive. As Westminster did not have to operate around this added obstacle of outside influence, Tone described England as a country “where, if anywhere, constitutional liberty is studied and known, where the influence of the Crown is, comparatively, much weaker than with us, and where there is, out of doors, a jealous vigilance, a fund of knowledge, and a spirit of resistance not yet to be found in Ireland.”¹⁸⁶ The republican expectations of citizen “jealous vigilance” and “spirit of resistance” were seen in England, he alleges, but not in Ireland, as a by-product of the lingering seventeenth-century republican challenges to the Crown dating back to the Civil War. By arguing these attributes were also to be found “out of doors” in Britain suggests that the wider public, and those outside of parliament, were more in tune with political matters because the representative system did not hamper such a significant portion of the population as it did with Catholics in Ireland. This is his second mention of “constitutional liberty” in his *Review*, stating that if “constitutional liberty be no longer an object worthy of exertion, let men consult their senses”. The concept of liberty was so entrenched in the British constitution, though unwritten, that it was a commonly held view that this ‘liberty’ was what distinguished Britain’s governance from arbitrary rule elsewhere. In some cases, British concepts of “constitutional liberty” would be used in arguments against the state in the same way that Tone does here, such as in the wake of the Massachusetts Government Act, when colonists had protested against the power of a royally-appointed governor.¹⁸⁷

In the above passage, Tone associates “constitutional liberty” with less monarchical influence and freer and more open elections, a comment on his hopes for increased representative democracy in Ireland – he suggests only that such liberty is “not yet to be found in Ireland”. Thus, his comments on the “influence of the Crown” position him in line with Whig thinking in opposition to the level of the British ministry’s influence in Ireland, which went beyond the individual person of the monarch. However, this was particularly true amid confusion surrounding the position of the monarchy. In the Glorious Revolution, the king had lost some of his influence over appointing government ministers - once the monarch’s power had been reduced, this meant that British MPs subsequently wielded more power than ever, and the British executive was able to appoint the Irish executive. It is in the light of this situation that Tone calls for reform, which suggests that his grievance is specifically with the relationship between the British executive and the Irish executive. While the British government

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. 309.

¹⁸⁷ John Phillip Reid, *Constitutional History of the American Revolution: The Authority to Tax*, vol. 2 (University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 37–39.

could appoint members of the Irish executive, the latter's majority in the Irish House of Commons allowed them to pass whichever legislation they chose. The situation was exacerbated by the shortcomings of the representative system, as those MPs with significant wealth and land power could also influence the outcome of elections in various constituencies across Ireland, not just the ones over which they had direct control. If the representative system were reformed, as Tone suggested, more people would have access to voting rights and there would be a greater chance of electing MPs who would act in Ireland's interest.

As has been demonstrated, Tone's chief political grievance was with the flawed constitutional relationship between Britain and Ireland. However, his *Review* also addressed more fundamental philosophical questions about the relationship between governments and their citizens, borrowing ideas from a variety of sources – initially from Locke, and in the latter parts of the document, from classical republican ideas of virtue. There are clear echoes of social contract theory in the idea that “every man renounces his natural right to legislate for himself and vests it in another”. Yet rather than seeing government as a *Leviathan* from whom power could not be withdrawn, Tone relied on an interpretation of Lockean theory, pioneered by early eighteenth century Whigs, that suggested the people had a right to bring about change and that this went beyond cases of political tyranny.¹⁸⁸ “When Governments makes [sic] an ostentatious exhibition of their strength,” Tone insisted, “it is time for the people to examine their own resources, and a thorough conviction of their relative powers is the best security for the peace of the land”. Tone's use of Lockean language may also be attributed to his engagement with Irish Patriot writings, particularly those of Molyneux, a close friend and follower of Locke, though this concept of active citizenship – in this case, the people opposing government – was also prevalent in ancient republicanism.¹⁸⁹ Indeed, Locke's influence on the Irish Whigs was also significant. Tone chose to take these seventeenth-century ideas further than the Whig club, whom he admired but did not join because he did not see their demands for overhaul of the existing system as going far enough. McBride contends that Locke's impact on Irish Whiggism was especially important following the American Revolution and the subsequent widespread circulation of

¹⁸⁸ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan: With Selected Variants from the Latin Edition of 1668*, ed. Edwin M. Curley (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1994). Hobbes argued for a ‘Leviathan’ figure as sovereign who bore the responsibility of decision-making in a strong government. For debates on the meaning of Locke's philosophy on revolution, see: Julian H. Franklin, *John Locke and the Theory of Sovereignty: Mixed Monarchy and the Right of Resistance in the Political Thought of the English Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Mark Goldie, “The English System of Liberty,” in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Political Thought*, ed. Mark Goldie and Robert Wokler, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 40–79; Patrick Riley, *Will and Political Legitimacy: A Critical Exposition of Social Contract Theory in Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Kant and Hegel* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013); Robert C. Grady, “Obligation, Consent, and Locke's Right to Revolution: ‘Who Is to Judge?’,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 9, no. 2 (1976): 277–92; Katrin Flikschuh, “Reason, Right, and Revolution: Kant and Locke,” *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 36, no. 4 (Autumn 2008): 375–404.

¹⁸⁹ Patrick Kelly, *Perceptions of Locke in Eighteenth-Century Ireland* (Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy, 1989).

Two Treatises in Ireland.¹⁹⁰ At this point, at the beginning of the 1790s, Tone's views on the people's right to revolution ranged from relatively moderate ideas to more seditious suggestions, neither initially attracting significant attention due to the prevalence of this kind of rhetoric in late eighteenth century Ireland. For example, he warned MPs who did not adhere to the wishes of their constituents:

There is no more fatal degree of delusion in politics than to mistake a state of *lethargy* in a kingdom for a state of *rest*. The fermentation will begin. The people will not always be defied.¹⁹¹

Thus, echoing Locke's contract theory arguments, *A Review* argued that public consent was, in fact, a government's "strongest pillar", without which it could be brought down.¹⁹² The *Review* was written against the backdrop of the general election of April-May 1790, an opportunity, in theory, to return power "to the hands that bestowed it". Pitt's victory over Fox appeared to affirm public trust in the Prime Minister, yet Tone again doubted whether the British government was really able to demonstrate the necessary characteristics, crucially republican virtue and wisdom, to enjoy such an influence in Ireland, which would have such a significant impact on the interests of the Irish people: "What is a *strong* Government? Is it something distinct and differing from a virtuous Government, or a *wise* Government?"¹⁹³ Pitt's position had been consolidated but that did not ensure that his government would serve the common good. While it was important for citizens to be politically virtuous, it was equally key for governments to embody civic virtue.¹⁹⁴ Without wisdom or virtue, they could not secure the "only true strength of Government", which was "the confidence of the people, a confidence not lightly bestowed, nor lightly withdrawn".¹⁹⁵

As has been widely acknowledged by historians of the period, the fact that the British constitution was unwritten allowed significant room for manoeuvre in debates about its legitimacy, even within

¹⁹⁰ Ian McBride, "Eighteenth-Century Ireland," in *Scripture Politics: Ulster Presbyterians and Irish Radicalism in the Late Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 87. Locke's role in shaping Irish Whig thought is further detailed in: R Eccleshall, "Anglican Political Thought in the Century After the Revolution of 1688," in *Political Thought in Ireland Since the Seventeenth Century*.

¹⁹¹ Ruth W. Grant, "Legitimate and Illegitimate Power: The Normative Theory," in *John Locke's Liberalism*, 1991, 52–56.

¹⁹² This Lockean understanding of popular consent is discussed, for example, in: Franklin, *John Locke and the Theory of Sovereignty*; Ruth W. Grant, *John Locke's Liberalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

¹⁹³ Tone, "A Review of the Conduct of Administration during the Seventh Session of Parliament- Addressed to the Constitutional Electors and Free People of Ireland, on the Approaching Dissolution."

¹⁹⁴ Joyce Oldham Appleby, *Liberalism and Republicanism in the Historical Imagination* (London: Harvard University Press, 1992), 214–16. This was particularly emphasised in ancient Greek republicanism, e.g. in Plato's *Republic*.

¹⁹⁵ Tone, "A Review of the Conduct of Administration during the Seventh Session of Parliament- Addressed to the Constitutional Electors and Free People of Ireland, on the Approaching Dissolution," 37.

particular political affiliations such as the Whigs.¹⁹⁶ Fundamental to certain Whig concepts of English identity was the notion that their mixed constitution, and its combining of the authority of the monarchy and the parliament, was innovative and advanced compared to other countries - even if there was still room for further reform. Yet whereas Foxites understood 1688 as being based on Lockean ideas of justified revolution against the 'tyrannical' James II – as well as Locke's discourse on rights – Burke saw the Glorious Revolution as simply a return to ancient principles.¹⁹⁷ Thus, the Whig party in Britain harboured members who adhered to both the Lockean and Burkean interpretations of the Glorious Revolution.

While it is Lockean thought which is more tangible in Tone's *Review*, the pamphlet also contains ideas which can likely be attributed to the widespread influence of Burke in Ireland, though ideological links between the two men have not been considered. Burke and his followers within the Whig party were at the forefront of arguing for the restoration of Britain's ancient constitution. Rather than advocating new reforms, Burke believed the Glorious Revolution had simply re-established the principles of the Gothic constitution.¹⁹⁸ The system had been described by Montesquieu as "the best kind of government men have been able to devise".¹⁹⁹ Moreover, looking to the constitution's supposed Germanic origins provided an example of government which Burke upheld as a sacred history. In a popular passage of *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Burke told his readers that for Britain to maintain law and order, as well as individual freedoms, it needed to look to its history, as the Glorious Revolution "was made to preserve our antient indisputable laws and liberties, and that ancient constitution of government which is our only security for law and liberty".²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁶ This is discussed, for example, in: H.T. Dickinson, "The British Constitution," in *A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Britain*, ed. H.T. Dickinson (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 2008), 3. Jon Roper, *Democracy and Its Critics: Anglo-American Democratic Thought in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2013), 116.

¹⁹⁷ On Locke's justification of revolution, see: Grant, *John Locke's Liberalism*; Michael Davis, "Locke on Consent: The Two Treatises as Practical Ethics," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 62, no. 248 (July 1, 2012): 464–85. A. John Simmons, *On the Edge of Anarchy: Locke, Consent, and the Limits of Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014). Goldie, *The Reception of Locke's Politics: The Age of the American Revolution, 1760-1780*, 1999). On Whig divisions, see: Jennifer Mori, "Parties and Politics," in *Britain in the Age of the French Revolution: 1785-1820* (Oxon: Routledge, 2014), 1–31; Ernest Anthony Smith, "A Party in Opposition, 1784–0," in *Whig Principles and Party Politics: Earl Fitzwilliam and the Whig Party, 1748-1833* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1975), 85–117; Mitchell, *Charles James Fox and the Disintegration of the Whig Party, 1782-1794*, 1–5.

¹⁹⁸ "The Ancient Constitution, the Social Contract, and the Modern State", Jacob T. Levy, *Rationalism, Pluralism, and Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 113–17; Daniel E. Ritchie, "Remembrance of Things Past: Edmund Burke, the Enlightenment, and Postmodernity," *Books & Culture* 10, no. 2 (April 2004): 24+.

¹⁹⁹ Charles de Secondat baron de Montesquieu, *Montesquieu: The Spirit of the Laws - Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought*, ed. Anne M. Cohler, Basia C. Miller, and Harold S. Stone (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 167–68.

²⁰⁰ Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, 44.

Burke looked to history to explain how things had reached their present stage, particularly regarding religious divisions in Ireland.²⁰¹ Similarly, Tone would later argue in his role as agent to the Catholics in Belfast that the task of reformers was “to remove ... the abuses which the lapse of many years” had allowed “rulers to invade and plunder them of their rights”.²⁰² The consequence was that Ireland had lost its “beautiful system of government, so admirably suited to our situation, our habits, and our wishes”.²⁰³ Echoing Burke and defending reform as merely a restoration of ancient rights, perhaps to avoid accusations of radicalism, he added: “We have not to innovate, but to restore. The just prerogatives of our monarch we respect and will maintain.” In this discussion of Catholic participation in the nation, it is likely the “beautiful system of government” he is alluding to dates prior to 1692, when Catholics were still able to sit in parliament, rather than discussing ancient constitutionalism.²⁰⁴ This provides an intriguing insight into Tone’s understanding of Catholic rights; as will be analysed in further detail in Chapter Two, prior to 1692 the fact that Catholics could sit in parliament did not mean they were, in any meaningful sense, part of the political nation, since they were still burdened by civil and economic disadvantages. That Tone defined this as a superior system of government suggests he was advocating only gradual reforms at this stage to ensure Catholics were represented in parliament.

The interpretation of history by looking to ancient examples was not unique to Burke, with Montesquieu also espousing the myth of an idealised past constitution in relation to the English system. Nevertheless, Burke was the most prominent contemporary voice making these arguments in Britain and Ireland.²⁰⁵ Scholars have increasingly addressed the nuances of Burke’s philosophy, no longer casting him in the reactionary light in which he was once depicted, but instead acknowledging his progressive views on Britain’s mismanagement of America and India, his hopes for more Irish Catholic rights, and his work against slavery.²⁰⁶ He was a politician cautious of sweeping or revolutionary reforms, preferring change to be gradual. Richard Bourke’s 2015 biography has been

²⁰¹ Sora Sato, “Edmund Burke’s Views of Irish History,” *History of European Ideas* 41, no. 3 (December 2014): 387–403.

²⁰² Wolfe Tone, “Extracts from the Belfast Address to the People of Ireland,” in *The United Irishmen - Their Lives and Times*, 186.

²⁰³ Tone, “Extracts from the Belfast Address to the People of Ireland,” 134–35.

²⁰⁴ Johnston-Liik, *MPs in Dublin: Companion to History of the Irish Parliament, 1692-1800*, 2006, 195; McGrath, *The Making of the Eighteenth-Century Irish Constitution: Government, Parliament and the Revenue, 1692-1714*, 74; McGrath, *Ireland and Empire, 1692-1770*, 23. An additional to the penal laws in 1692 to prevent Catholics sitting in the Irish parliament – on top of their pre-existing exclusion from the English parliament – was part of William III and Mary’s attempts to cement Protestant rule.

²⁰⁵ Ursula Haskins Gonthier, *Montesquieu and England: Enlightened Exchanges, 1689-1755* (London: Routledge, 2015), 113–14.

²⁰⁶ Jesse Norman, *Edmund Burke: The First Conservative* (New York: Basic Books, 2013); Drew Macaig, “Burke in Brief - a ‘Philosophical Primer,’” in *Edmund Burke in America: The Contested Career of the Father of Modern Conservatism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 7–23; David Bromwich, *The Intellectual Life of Edmund Burke* (London: Harvard University Press, 2014).

crucial to reassessing historical understandings of Burke, encouraging readers not to view his different conservative and reformist ideas as contradictory, but to appreciate how he attempted to reconcile these contrasting stances.²⁰⁷ Bourke makes this argument primarily because of Burke's views on Britain's activities in its colonies, but it also reflects his programme demanding increased political rights for Catholics and dissenters.²⁰⁸ Indeed, Tone would have likely thought of Burke as an advocate of reform, as many others did on account of his early support for America's revolutionaries.²⁰⁹ From this perspective, it is not surprising that Tone would have borrowed a number of views and arguments from Burke on constitutional matters.

Tone's *Review* ultimately provides several useful insights into the mechanisms of his political development. Some of its key arguments stem from Lockean discourse about individual liberty. Specifically, this informed Tone's stance on tacit consent and the right of the people to bring about political change. It is also evident that his thinking was affected by divisions in the Whig party and related debates on the constitution. Yet Tone found common ground with both Fox and Burke as he advocated change, all the while recognising the merits of the latter's ancient constitutionalism. He was chiefly concerned with how reform of the Westminster parliament would impact Ireland, like many others using the British political scene – defined at that point by the regency crisis and the ongoing impact of the Glorious Revolution – to challenge accepted ideas about the legislative power of the British and Irish parliaments. British ideas about the constitution were therefore subverted against the government at Westminster to explain why Irish MPs should have greater freedom.

Lessons from the 1782 Constitution: *Spanish War!* (1790) and *An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland* (1791)

Tone's chief grievance with the 1782 Constitution was its inability to grant Ireland political independence, as evidenced by British control over crucial matters such as Irish foreign policy. In addition, he believed Grattan's Parliament had not done enough to include Catholics in the political nation. Tone expressed these criticisms in a number of publications. Notably, his 1790 pamphlet *Spanish War!* argued for the Dublin parliament to play a much greater role in Ireland's foreign policy, a view also echoed in *On the Threatened War with Spain*, a text also written by Tone but purporting to be an anonymous reply to his initial pamphlet of the same year.²¹⁰ Similar questions about the so-

²⁰⁷ Richard Bourke, *Empire and Revolution: The Political Life of Edmund Burke* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

²⁰⁸ Bourke, 573.

²⁰⁹ Edmund Burke, *Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents/The Two Speeches on America*, ed. Francis Canavan and Edward John Payne (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1999).

²¹⁰ Wolfe Tone, "On the Threatened War with Spain - by a Liberty Weaver," in *The Writings of Theobald Wolfe Tone, 1763-98: Tone's Career in Ireland to June 1795*, vol. I. 63–66.

called “co-equal and co-ordinate” relationship between Britain and Ireland were raised too, in his 1790 essay, *On the English Connection*.²¹¹ Subsequently, in 1791, he would argue for more tangible reform in the area of Catholic Relief by reiterating his views on individual rights in *An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland*.²¹² At the heart of this range of works lay a deep-seated and persistent frustration at Britain’s interference in the proceedings of the Irish parliament, a sentiment that would manifest itself in the formation of the United Irishmen that year. In order to appreciate Tone’s role in the organisation’s founding more fully, this section will also consider the Society’s *Declarations and Resolutions*.²¹³

Ireland’s foreign policy:

By the time he wrote *Spanish War!* in 1790, Tone had consolidated his views on how Britain and Ireland ought to function alongside one another.²¹⁴ At the time of writing, Britain was on the verge of war with Spain following the Nootka crisis.²¹⁵ Tension was sparked by a number of British ships veering into Spanish territory to practice the fur trade at Nootka in north America. Despite the ships being seized by Spain, Britain refused to recognise that country’s authority over the area and threatened war, hoping to capitalise on Spain’s reduced naval power by the end of the eighteenth century. In *Spanish War!* Tone considered Ireland’s role in relation to foreign policy. As it stood, Ireland would be required to participate in the threatened conflict if Britain chose to declare war; this was, in fact, the prerogative of the monarch. As Tone put it, the Irish parliament ought to be “no further bound to support a war than the English Parliament is ... the King of Ireland may *declare* the war, but it is the Parliament only which can carry it on” by agreeing to raise taxes.²¹⁶ The pamphlet therefore argued that the 1782 Constitution, hailed for allowing the Irish parliament greater freedom from British decision-making, was “waste paper” if this freedom did not stretch to Ireland deciding its own foreign policy, rather than being forced to participate in a war with Spain to benefit Britain’s commercial interests.

Tone instead suggested that Ireland should be able to direct its own foreign affairs, which would have fundamentally changed the existing and longstanding relationship between Britain and Ireland. This was a relatively original line of argument, clearly articulating the uncommon view that Ireland could

²¹¹ Tone, “On the English Connection: Essays for the Political Club Formed by Tone in Dublin 1790-91.”

²¹² Tone, “An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland,” 1791.

²¹³ “The Declarations, Resolutions, and Constitution of the Societies of United Irishmen,” 1792, Charlemont Papers, MS 12/R/16, Royal Irish Academy.

²¹⁴ Tone, *Spanish War!*

²¹⁵ For more on the Nootka crisis and diplomatic tensions between Britain and Spain, see: John M. Norris, “The Policy of the British Cabinet in the Nootka Crisis,” *The English Historical Review* 70, no. 277 (October 1955): 562–80.

²¹⁶ Tone, *Spanish War!*

and should conduct its own foreign policy. Nevertheless, it falls in line with the ancient republican view that states must be able to defend themselves militarily, and that citizens should be prepared to defend their own state – rather than another state, as fighting on Britain’s behalf would entail. The pamphlet also demonstrated Tone’s willingness to contradict the English Whigs on the issue of war with Spain. The text prompted one of Tone’s first mentions of the “independence” of Ireland, although at this stage, he did not use ‘independence’ to mean a republic, but simply more autonomy for the Irish Parliament, just as many Irish Whigs demanded. The crux of Tone’s argument is found within the first few pages of his pamphlet:

To speak of the independence of a country, and yet deny her a negative voice in a question of no less import to her well-being than that of peace or war, is impudent nonsense.²¹⁷

The idea that countries had their own ‘well-being’ reflected republican ideas about the happiness of the nation.²¹⁸ Such discussions were popular in Dutch political thought and famous in many parts of Europe, particularly thanks to Pieter de la Court, who took inspiration from the Hebrew republic and based his assertions on biblical interpretations of divine power.²¹⁹ Britain damaging such ‘happiness’ was one of several pitfalls Tone saw as a consequence of Ireland maintaining these political ties, contrary to Grattan, who was satisfied with his achievements in 1782 and subsequently made a “fixed, steady, and unalterable resolution to stand or fall with Great Britain”.²²⁰ Instead, Tone believed that constitution should be seen as a “most bungling, imperfect business”, as he would reiterate in his 1791 *Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland* in which he claimed “no Irishman of rank could become a member or supporter of Government, without at once renouncing all pretensions to common decency, honesty or honour” – all, in themselves, key components of civic virtue which Irish MPs were not abiding by as long as they sided with Britain for personal advancement.²²¹

²¹⁷ Ibid. 11.

²¹⁸ Honohan, *Civic Republicanism*, 125, 147; Phillip Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 207.

²¹⁹ René Koekoek, “The Hebrew Republic in Dutch Political Thought c. 1650-1675,” in *Ancient Models in the Early Modern Republican Imagination*, ed. Wyger Velema and Weststeijn (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2017), 234–59; Hans W. Blom, “The Moral and Political Philosophy of Spinoza,” in *Routledge History of Philosophy: The Renaissance and Seventeenth Century Rationalism*, ed. G.H.R. Parkinson, vol. 4 (London: Routledge, 2003), 313–49; Hans W. Blom, “Popularizing Government: Democratic Tendencies in Anglo-Dutch Republicanism,” in *European Contexts for English Republicanism*, ed. Gaby Mahlberg and Dirk Wiemann (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 121–39; Arthur Weststeijn, *Commercial Republicanism in the Dutch Golden Age: The Political Thought of Johan & Pieter de La Court* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011).

²²⁰ Henry Grattan Jr., “Opening of Parliament - Lord Lieutenant’s Speech, January 21, 1794. Including a Speech from Henry Grattan,” in *The Speeches of the Right Honourable Henry Grattan: In the Irish, and in the Imperial Parliament*, vol. 3 (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1822), 117.

²²¹ Tone, “An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland”, 9–10.

Chapter Two will explore in greater detail how Tone looked to Ancient Rome as a positive example of a republican society, as shown in his Sandwich Islands memoranda (1788 and 1790), but his admiration for Roman militarism was also evident in *Spanish War!* On this occasion, he urged Britain and Ireland to hesitate before following “the example that Caesar shewed” – Caesar often blamed for bringing down the Roman republic by becoming a corrupted, imperial leader - in spite of their “native valour” and tendency to be “impatient of peace and prompt for battle”.²²² Caesar served as a cautionary tale against empire corrupting political virtue, hence Tone not wanting Ireland to be party to Britain’s expansion and commercial interests abroad. Ireland could not be compensated for “treasure spent and her gallant sons fallen”, even with “valour, like virtue, its own reward”. This was particularly true as civic military virtue only really applied to nations where the citizens had a stake in government, unlike in Ireland. This may also be read as a distinction between essential military virtue and imperial war-mongering – like Caesar - which was not necessarily to be admired.²²³ Tone suggested, therefore, in a clear attempt to influence Irish MPs, that their Parliament hamper Britain’s war effort as it was “their privilege to grant or withhold supplies”.²²⁴ With Irish MPs having the ability to do so, the main obstacle was that a majority within the Parliament who would defy Britain in this way was still lacking. This may further explain Tone’s stance in favour of reform of the representative system to weed out corruption. It was not simply a problem of Irish MPs’ personal links to British MPs, but the way the entire system operated, allowing the Irish House of Commons to be controlled by the executive.

If the Irish Parliament were to defy Britain, it would force the British government to reassess “how an army is to be paid or governed”, a persisting debate among Tone’s eighteenth-century contemporaries and one he therefore hoped could be exploited.²²⁵ At the heart of these debates was a fear that standing armies had the potential to overthrow existing power structures and that paying soldiers would encourage mercenarism. In Ireland, the issue of standing armies’ power was all the more pertinent following legislation in 1769 which meant Ireland was obliged to provide permanent financial support to thousands of soldiers in British overseas regiments.²²⁶ Augmentation had long

²²² Tone, “Spanish War!”, 2.

²²³ David Armitage, “Liberty and Empire,” in *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 125–46.

²²⁴ Tone, *Spanish War!* 3.

²²⁵ John Trenchard, *A Short History of Standing Armies in England (1698)* (London: W. France, 1731); James Boswell, *Boswell: The Ominous Years, 1774-1776*, ed. Charles Ryskamp and Frederick Albert Pottle (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963); Julia Banister, *Masculinity, Militarism and Eighteenth-Century Culture, 1689-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 15; Heather E. Barry, *A Dress Rehearsal for Revolution: John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon’s Works in Eighteenth-Century British America* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2007), 13.

²²⁶ Thomas Bartlett, “The Augmentation of the Army in Ireland, 1767-69,” *English Historical Review* 96 (1981): 540–59; Charles Ivar McGrath, “Manpower,” in *Ireland and Empire, 1692-1770* (London: Routledge, 2015), 69–167; Martyn J Powell, “Lord Townshend and Constant Residency,” in *Britain and Ireland in the Eighteenth-Century Crisis of Empire* (Basingstoke: Springer, 2002), 95–140.

been a contentious issue in the Irish parliament. New Acts simply formalised and increased Ireland's obligations, when in fact its contributions to British military regiments in the empire had been made since the 1690s. In the following decades, augmentation remained at the forefront of Irish politics, not least because of the fears of the minority, Protestant ruling classes, enhanced by a further clause which ensured that Irish foot regiments would be brought up to the same strength as overseas regiments.²²⁷ The purpose of these Irish regiments was essentially to defend Britain and to serve British interests overseas and especially to provide further strength in numbers after the expansions of the Seven Years' War. The Patriot writer, Charles Lucas, helped to bring attention to these issues and their constitutional implications, though it should be acknowledged that augmentation was a divisive issue among Irish MPs and many viewed it as necessary.²²⁸

In his essay *On the Threatened War with Spain* a month after the publication of *Spanish War!* Tone reiterated the idea of Ireland separating militarily from Britain. First, he admitted that Irishmen would be predisposed to engage in the conflict, as "a brave and fighting people" – once again, republican characteristics – but that the King nevertheless had the prerogative to prevent Ireland going to war.²²⁹ As highlighted, Ireland was dependent on both the British parliament and the Crown to make these decisions, as "I never had a doubt but that Ireland must of necessity be involved in every war which any minister of England should think fit to make".²³⁰ Ireland could be involved in British wars by default and in the existing climate, Irish MPs would cooperate with British requests to fund these conflicts. While the Glorious Revolution had succeeded in granting Westminster greater legislative freedom, Ireland was still left relying on the King's intervention to prevent involvement in war and all Irish MPs could do was implore him to act on their behalf:

Our King has a right to make terms of *neutrality* for us during the approaching war, and if it be practicable for him to do so, whether it would be advisable for our two Houses of Parliament to address him to do so.²³¹

The impact on Ireland's economy:

In reality, the slim likelihood of the king intervening in such a way meant Tone would have been aware that while his point was legitimate, it was not a practical suggestion. The war with Spain had therefore served as a reminder that Britain's political apparatus retained much of the same power,

²²⁷ In light of these fears, the Incitement to Mutiny Act was eventually passed in 1797.

²²⁸ Neal Garnham, *The Militia in Eighteenth-Century Ireland: In Defence of the Protestant Interest* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2012), 83.

²²⁹ Tone, "On the Threatened War with Spain," 64.

²³⁰ Tone, *Life*, 560.

²³¹ Tone, "On the Threatened War with Spain," 65.

specifically in terms of foreign policy, over the Irish parliament as it had enjoyed prior to 1782. Before that year, Tone supposes that “it was of very little moment what were the opinions of Irishmen on any public question”, yet oppressive laws which predated 1782 had not been fixed by the new constitution.²³² For instance, the series of Navigation Acts which had been introduced in the seventeenth century had regulated England’s commerce with other countries and prompted resistance in Ireland, particularly among the Irish Volunteers, local militias many of whom would later join the United Irishmen.²³³ English goods could be exported to Ireland without tariffs, but Irish imports into Britain had taxes attached to them. Amidst the prospect of naval conflict with Spain over British imperial interests at sea, these laws gained new relevance.

Tone’s 1790 essay, *On the English Connection*, drew further attention to English laws limiting Irish trade. The essay was written for an unnamed Dublin political club which contained some of the same members as the future United Irishmen, including William Drennan and Thomas Russell (1763-1803). Tone cited the Wool Act of 1699, a law which prohibited Irish woollen exports as they were regarded as a threat to England’s wool trade and which was still in place and effective at the time of his writing. Since the Irish woollen industry had been very profitable, this measure had served as a hammer blow to the economy.²³⁴ Moreover, it effectively confirmed the suspicion – the same one that would spur on America’s revolutionaries many decades later – that Britain viewed Ireland as just one of its many colonies. Thus, Tone expressed his belief that the population of Ireland, “four millions of people”, required “the recovery of their rights from a foreign usurpation”.²³⁵ In doing so, he appealed to the Irish MPs who did not think Westminster had jurisdiction to legislate for them, rather than corrupt members of the Irish government who were content to follow Britain’s lead.²³⁶ Tone noted how “our woollen manufacture was demolished by a single vote of the English Commons”.²³⁷ His comment highlights not merely his opposition to this particular piece of legislation, which was less of an issue after 1782 having been introduced almost a century prior, but his wider concerns about the fact that the Irish parliament would not repeal such restrictions on trade that had been passed in Westminster.

²³² Tone, “On the English Connection.”

²³³ James Guilfoyle, “Ireland, Mercantilism, and the Navigation Acts, 1660-1686,” in *Taxation, Politics, and Protest in Ireland, 1662–2016*, ed. Douglas Kanter and Patrick Walsh (Dublin: Springer, 2019); Thomas M. Truxes, “Trade Before 1731,” in *Irish-American Trade, 1660-1783* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 7–29.

²³⁴ Hugh F. Kearney, “The Political Background to English Mercantilism, 1695-1700,” *Economic History Review* 2, no. 11 (1959): 484–962; Patrick Kelly, “The Irish Woollen Export Prohibition Act of 1699: Kearney Re-Visited,” *Irish Economic and Social History* 7 (1980): 22–44.

²³⁵ Tone, *Life*, 323.

²³⁶ Tory MPs planned these restrictions on Irish and American wool exports in order to stamp out competition for English merchants.

²³⁷ Tone, *Life*, 323.

Tone was reiterating the arguments of other literary critics of the political ties between the two countries. For example, William Molyneux's *The Case of Ireland* (1698) had dealt with similar constitutional issues, and especially the English parliament's suppression of the Irish wool trade.²³⁸ Molyneux's work, greatly shaped by his personal and intellectual links with Locke, became the leading case for Ireland managing its own laws. *The Case of Ireland* may itself have been inspired by *A Disquisition*, an unpublished piece written in 1660 by Molyneux's father-in-law Sir William Domville.²³⁹ Swift also addressed these issues in *Drapier's Letters* (1724), defending the Irish economy amidst the Wood's half-pence controversy, when Britain had granted manufacturer William Wood a patent for a private copper coinage that many within Ireland feared was inferior in quality.²⁴⁰ Swift had stressed the need for Irishmen to support Irish manufacturers, inspiring the protests of generations of tradesmen in Ireland.²⁴¹ More recently, patriot sentiment was evident in efforts to revive the Irish economy, for example by trying to increase domestic corn-growing and limits on British imports through the course of the 1780s.²⁴² From 1698 onwards, Britain had banned Irish wool and cloth being exported to anywhere but England. In the 1780s, this damaged the prospect of trade with newly independent America. While these were more contemporary issues, it is evident that Tone was most familiar with the arguments of Molyneux and Swift, which were still among the most prominent despite having been expressed decades before. While Tone attempted to take credit for formulating his own ideas on the back of "a closer examination into the situation of my native country", he acknowledged he might have found "in Swift or Molyneux, that the influence of England was the radical vice of our Government".²⁴³ Hence, though he claims to have come to this conclusion himself, he was aware that his arguments are very similar to those of previous Irish writers. As will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter, later eighteenth-century reformers owed a great deal to these early Irish Patriots, who set a precedent for criticising Westminster's dominance of the Dublin parliament.

However, Tone also highlighted other concerns regarding the relationship between Britain and Ireland after 1782. He argued that later legislation had failed to improve the situation. The 1789 Pension Bill, for example, had been intended to stop pensioners from sitting in parliament to limit the number of

²³⁸ Molyneux, *The Case of Ireland's Being Bound by Acts of Parliament in England, Stated*.

²³⁹ Patrick Kelly, "Sir William Domville: A Disquisition Touching That Great Question Whether an Act of Parliament Made in England Shall Bind the Kingdom and People of Ireland without Their Allowance and Acceptance of Such Act in the Kingdom of Ireland," *Analecta Hibernica*, no. 40 (January 1, 2007): 17–70.

²⁴⁰ Swift, *Drapier's Letters* (1724–5); Jonathan Swift, *Swift's Irish Pamphlets: An Introductory Selection*, ed. Joseph McMinn (Newark: Smythe, 1991).

²⁴¹ Higgins, "Shopping for Ireland: Consumption, Gender, and The Politics of Free Trade," in *A Nation of Politicians: Gender, Patriotism, and Political Culture in Late Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, 82–106.

²⁴² K.H. Connell, "The Potato in Ireland," in *Nationalism and Popular Protest in Ireland*, ed. Charles H.E. Philpin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 110–26; Sean J. Connolly, "Eighteenth-Century Ireland - Colony or Ancien Régime," in *The Making of Modern Irish History: Revisionism and the Revisionist Controversy*, ed. D.G Boyce and Alan O'Day (London: Routledge, 2006), 15–34.

²⁴³ Tone, *Life*, 32.

MPs beholden to Dublin Castle, and also to limit the cost of these pensions.²⁴⁴ It was deemed by many reformers a positive step towards changing the parliamentary system, but it was felt by the Irish executive to be a blow to their power as it limited the number of people in the Irish House of Commons who were receiving an income from the government. Tabled by John Forbes, MP for Drogheda and second to Grattan, the most prominent Patriot voice in the Irish parliament, it was modelled on similar legislation which had already been introduced in England.²⁴⁵ For Tone, the fact it had not been enforced in Ireland properly meant that the British Crown still had “general power over the public money”, an unreasonable state of affairs for “a country professing to be independent of England”.²⁴⁶

He further warned that “the nation is loaded with a debt under which she staggers to raise the purchase money of her own slavery”.²⁴⁷ On this issue, it is noteworthy that classical republican anti-debt arguments had recently experienced a revival in the writings of the Scottish Enlightenment and subsequently, in the rhetoric of the American Revolution.²⁴⁸ Scottish MP Sir John Sinclair had brought such questions to the fore in Britain with his influential *History of the Public Revenue of the British Empire*.²⁴⁹ More widely, as the debts of European monarchies spiralled in the eighteenth century, so did fears that this system was unsustainable and would reach a moment of crisis. It is unsurprising, given Tone’s interest in classical republican ideas, that he was firmly opposed to high national debts, though he could again look to the example of Swift and his satires of 1720-21, which criticised the move towards forming a Bank of Ireland and the use of paper credit, which he believed

²⁴⁴ Henry Grattan Jr., ed., “Pension Bill,” in *The Speeches of the Right Honourable Henry Grattan*, 137.

²⁴⁵ Neil Herman, “Henry Grattan, the Regency Crisis and the Emergence of a Whig Party in Ireland, 1788-9,” *Irish Historical Studies* 32, no. 128 (November 2001): 478–97; “Pension Bill,” in *The Speeches of the Right Honourable Henry Grattan*, 137.

²⁴⁶ Tone, “A Review of the Conduct of Administration during the Seventh Session of Parliament- Addressed to the Constitutional Electors and Free People of Ireland, on the Approaching Dissolution.”

²⁴⁷ Ibid. 30.

²⁴⁸ For further reading on discussion of the national debt in the Scottish Enlightenment, see: David Hume, “Of Public Credit (1752),” in *Hume: Political Essays*, edited by Knud Haakonssen, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 166–79. Adam Smith, *Adam Smith’s Wealth of Nations - A Reader’s Guide*, ed. Jerry Evensky (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 241–45. Roger L Emerson, “Hume’s Intellectual Development: Part II,” in *Essays on David Hume, Medical Men and the Scottish Enlightenment: “Industry, Knowledge and Humanity”* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2013). On wider debates about the issue, see: Thomas L. Pangle, *The Spirit of Modern Republicanism: The Moral Vision of the American Founders and the Philosophy of Locke* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 101. Michael Sonenscher, “Republicanism, State Finances and the Emergence of Commercial Society in Eighteenth-Century France - or from Royal to Ancient Republicanism and Back,” in *Republicanism: The Values of Republicanism in Early Modern Europe: A Shared European Heritage*, ed. Quentin Skinner and Martin van Gelderen, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 275–89; Michael Sonenscher, “The Nation’s Debt and the Birth of the Modern Republic: The French Fiscal Deficit and the Politics of the Revolution of 1789,” *History of Political Thought* 18 (1997): 64–103; Michael Sonenscher, *Before the Deluge: Public Debt, Inequality, and the Intellectual Origins of the French Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

²⁴⁹ Sir John Sinclair, *The History of the Public Revenue of the British Empire* (W. and A. Strahan, 1789).

corrupted virtue.²⁵⁰ Tone's stance on debt was an archetypal republican one, rather than following his Whig contemporaries, who had supported the City of London's lending to the state since the late seventeenth century.²⁵¹ The idea that all credit was bad as it brought instability, and thus creditors were bad citizens, was prevalent in classical republicanism, Charlemagne's empire providing a notable, looked-to example of a republic operating well within its own fiscal means.²⁵² In addition to broader concerns about the Irish state's financial viability, Tone was aware from historical experience that Ireland would not benefit from Britain's economic policies.

Catholic representation:

Tone's efforts to highlight the shortcomings of the existing political system were not limited to the Irish Parliament's limited control over economic or foreign policy. In other publications, he addressed the important question of whether Irishmen were sufficiently represented in parliament, as without this representation they could not participate in the nation, as would be the case in an archetypal republic. Perhaps the clearest example of this comes in his 1791 pamphlet, *An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland*.²⁵³ It is also worth considering how he addressed the implications of so much of the population being excluded from the political process. By 1791, he had taken up the cause of securing greater political representation for Ireland's Catholics as his primary political battle, attributing many of their continued woes to the events of the early 1780s. He assessed: "We have no national government. Before the year 1782, it was not pretended that we had."²⁵⁴ Whereas the 1782 Constitution had initially been hailed by Grattan as a revolution, Tone argued that "all we got by what we are pleased to dignify with the name of Revolution, was simply, the means of doing good according to law, without recurring to the great rule of nature, which is above all positive statutes".²⁵⁵ Discussions of the "rule of nature" or "natural law" were common among a number of political thinkers in the eighteenth century. Crucially, such a concept was universal and thus could be applied to the citizens of any nation. Making up an important pillar of social contract theory, 'natural law' fed into developing eighteenth century notions of 'natural rights', though Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679)

²⁵⁰ Seán Moore, "Satiric Norms, Swift's Financial Satires and the Bank of Ireland Controversy of 1720-1," *Eighteenth-Century Ireland* 17 (2002): 26–56.

²⁵¹ Brian Hill, "Parliament, Parties and Elections (1688-1760)," in *A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Britain*, ed. H.T. Dickinson (London: John Wiley & Sons, 2008), 55–69.

²⁵² Sonenscher, "Republicanism, State Finances and the Emergence of Commercial Society in Eighteenth-Century France - or from Royal to Ancient Republicanism and Back," 275–89.

²⁵³ Tone, "An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland," 1791.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 10.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 10.

had in fact stressed the differences between them as law also emphasised obligation. This was in fact closer to Tone's understanding than Locke, who emphasised men's freedom in the state of nature.²⁵⁶ Despite these ideas evolving in the radical Enlightenment, Tone chose not to evoke images of Irishmen being free in their natural state. He argued that for Catholics, 1782 "left three-fourths of our countrymen slaves as it found them".²⁵⁷ This provides further insight into his understanding of liberty, which allowed for Catholics to have been free in the state of nature, but enslaved by the legislation of previous centuries and which 1782 had failed to undo. As will be discussed later in this chapter, Tone rejected elements of the state of nature, as interpreted for example by Paine, but crucially these ideas could still be applied to the Irish context because they discussed man in universal terms of inherent rights, regardless of the historical realities of Irish Catholics.

A common criticism of the settlement reached in 1782 among reformers such as the United Irishmen was that it did not do enough to incorporate the Catholic population. Tone's response in the early 1790s was to push for further Catholic Relief Acts to build upon the limited provisions of the 1778 Act.²⁵⁸ What is notable at this stage is that Tone accused those MPs who had accepted "the Revolution of 1782" of enabling "Irishmen to sell at a much higher price their honour, their integrity, and the interests of their countrymen".²⁵⁹ Irish MPs, in theory, could now enjoy legislative freedom from Britain but chose not to due to vested personal, financial and political interests. Where they might have achieved more representation for Catholics, the body of predominantly Protestant MPs chose to maintain their own interests, even though they now had no excuse not to incorporate more of the Irish people.

By examining *Spanish War!* and *An Argument on behalf of the Catholics of Ireland*, it has therefore been possible to explore Tone's three main, long-standing grievances that the 1782 Constitution had not done enough to address, necessitating further reform – restrictions on Ireland's foreign policy, the negative effects of the connection with Westminster upon the Irish economy, and the plight of Irish Catholics.

²⁵⁶ Patrick Riley, "On Finding an Equilibrium between Consent and Natural Law in Locke's Political Philosophy," *Political Studies* 22 (December 1974): 432–52.

²⁵⁷ Ibid. 11.

²⁵⁸ The 1778 legislation had allowed Catholics to inherit land and brought new protection for Catholic priests from prosecution.

²⁵⁹ Tone, "An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland," 1791, 11.

Tone and the formation of the United Irishmen:

Out of these injustices grew the Society of United Irishmen, founded in 1791. Tone had already written up a list of resolutions for a new political organisation when he was invited to Belfast to discuss the formation of a reformist group. By October, the United Irishmen had held their first meeting, before the Dublin branch's inaugural meeting in November, where his resolutions were welcomed, with the exception of his plans to extend voting rights to Catholics.²⁶⁰ Initially formed by a small, intimate circle with all leading members present at meetings, the United Irishmen began to agitate on national issues. Their *Declarations and Resolutions* (1791) served as a list of grievances with the existing parliamentary system, arguing that they had "no national government" and were "ruled by Englishmen, and the servants of Englishmen", a view that mirrored Tone's personal stance – unsurprising given his role in founding the organisation.²⁶¹ An obvious argument against Britain's limited form of representative democracy was that a government made up of aristocrats would only serve to further the interests of fellow members of the nobility. Yet, the United Irishmen's issue with the Dublin Parliament's failings was based on nationality rather than class, their *Declarations* claiming the Irish Parliament's "object is the interest of another country...and these men have the whole of the power and patronage of the country as means to seduce and to subdue the honesty and the spirit of her representatives in the legislature".²⁶²

The question should be asked how much input Tone had into the writing of documents attributed to the United Irishmen, especially as Drennan was appointed chief scribe responsible for taking notes at meetings. Historians have long debated Tone's role in the foundation of the Society and whether their political thought mirrored his own.²⁶³ There have been contradictory claims in scholarship regarding whether his ideas matched those of his allies in the Society.²⁶⁴ Elliott, for instance, notes that Drennan's views in the early 1790s were far more militant.²⁶⁵ In this way, the consensus that the group's aims were relatively uniform and that there was little internal conflict in their early days has started to be challenged. Michael Durey does so by recounting the dispute between William Drennan

²⁶⁰ Connolly, *Divided Kingdom: Ireland 1630-1800*, 438–39.

²⁶¹ "Declaration and Resolutions of the Society of United Irishmen of Belfast." Note that the October version is clearer in its aims than the document written in July.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Early claims depicted Tone as the sole leader and founder of the organisation: William James Macneven and Thomas Addis Emmet, *Pieces of Irish History: Illustrative of the Condition of the Catholics of Ireland, of the Origin and Progress of the Political System of the United Irishmen; and of Their Transactions with the Anglo-Irish Government* (New York: University of Michigan Press, 1807), 17; Madden, *The United Irishmen: Their Lives and Times*, 43.

²⁶⁴ Frank MacDermot, *Theobald Wolfe Tone and His Times*, 59–62; A.T.Q. Stewart, "A Stable and Unseen Power: Dr William Drennan and the Origins of the United Irishmen," in *Essays Presented to Michael Roberts*, ed. John Bossy and Peter Jupp (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1976), 80–92; Dunne, *Colonial Outsider*, 12.

²⁶⁵ Elliott, *Wolfe Tone*, 119.

and William Paulet Carey which not only reflected wider class tensions in the group, and their associated different perspectives on the direction their radicalism should take, but which had serious consequences and ended with Drennan facing trial for seditious libel in 1794.²⁶⁶ Even as the nuances of United Irish politics are now being better appreciated, what has not yet been attempted is a linguistic analysis to cast light on Tone's input. As a founding member, he would have been a significant voice in setting out their aims as they are found in the United's Irishmen's *Declarations and Resolutions*, gearing towards parliamentary reform. The document provides particularly valuable insight into Tone's views, since the *Declarations* were not published for public consumption but circulated privately among the Belfast radicals who agreed to its principles. It sees the United Irishmen admire revolutions in Europe, contrasting them to Ireland's constitution of 1782, because elsewhere, "the rights of men are ascertained in theory and that theory substantiated by practice".²⁶⁷

The United Irishmen's *Declarations* further state that "antiquity can no longer defend absurd and oppressive reforms against the common sense and common interests of mankind" – the term "common sense" itself, perhaps, representing a thinly-veiled reference to Paine's work of the same name.²⁶⁸ It is a clear attack on Burke's ancient constitutionalism and the idea that historical traditions could be used to defend current injustices. Despite sympathising with some of Burke's views, in the early 1790s, Tone and his fellow United Irishmen did not really differ from the Irish Whigs - many of whom were deterred by Burke's anti-revolutionary rhetoric in *Reflections* - in that they still wanted fairly comprehensive reform of the existing constitution, rather than entirely changing Ireland's system of government to an independent republic, which nobody was calling for at this stage.²⁶⁹ The *Declarations* twice mentions securing the rights of individual citizens in the context of forming the United Irishmen, further reiterating the importance of this mantra to the Society. This had not been achieved in 1782, hence what was now needed was "a complete and radical reform of the representation of the people in Parliament", so "essential to the prosperity and freedom of Ireland", though it is not clarified who 'the people' were or whether all the people constituted 'citizens'.²⁷⁰ There are also echoes of republican rhetoric in the text. The United Irishmen believed that securing parliamentary reform was their "duty, as Irishmen", but their rationale for doing so was essentially based on Lockean principles:

²⁶⁶ Michael Durey, "The Dublin Society of United Irishmen and the Politics of the Carey-Drennan Dispute, 1792-1794," *The Historical Journal* 37, no. 1 (1994): 89-111.

²⁶⁷ "Declaration and Resolutions of the Society of United Irishmen of Belfast."

²⁶⁸ Thomas Paine, "Common Sense," in *The Political and Miscellaneous Works of Thomas Paine* (London: R. Carlile, 1819), 5-56.

²⁶⁹ Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*.

²⁷⁰ "Declaration and Resolutions of the Society of United Irishmen of Belfast."

All government is acknowledged to originate from the people and to be so far only obligatory as it protects their rights and promotes their welfare.²⁷¹

Having engaged primarily with Irish political developments, but also contemporary British politics in the late 1780s and early 1790s, Tone found strong intellectual foundations on which to build his demands for parliamentary reform, which represented the primary purpose of his writings. Admitting his intellectual debt to Irish patriot writers like Molyneux and Swift, he did not believe the 1782 Constitution had granted sufficient power to Irish MPs, or that they were using what power they did wield effectively, as evidenced in a number of his works. Tone opposed Ireland having to be led by Britain's foreign policy, while the 1782 Constitution was further undermined by the persisting limitations on Catholics sitting in parliament and voting. These issues shaped Tone's political direction, particularly when combined with his ancient republican-tinged understanding of citizen participation. This also fed his criticisms of the British government's lack of virtue and inability to act on Ireland's 'national spirit'.

Paine vs Burke and the pamphlet disputes of 1790-91

As we have seen, Tone's pamphlets in the years 1790-91 are indicative of his approach to Irish political affairs, in particular as it relates to the shortcomings of Grattan's parliament and the representative system in Ireland. Yet his publications in the period are also notable for his engagement with wider European debates, most notably the Burke-Paine pamphlet war of the early 1790s, which polarised British political commentators and set the tone for Britain's reception of the French Revolution.²⁷² This section will explore his responses to the controversy in greater detail.

While the so-call Burke-Paine pamphlet war certainly included a wide array of contributions (with Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin, for example, also publishing important works), here the discussion will primarily focus on Tone's engagement with Burke and Paine's ideas. Burke's prominence in British and Irish political discourse on late eighteenth-century constitutionalism has already been explored in the previous sections, but we will now turn to examining his role in important political discussions about revolutions and rights as the chaotic 1790s commenced and, in turn, how Tone reacted to these very different aspects of Burke's thought. It will be evidenced that Tone took a keen interest in Burke and Paine's pamphlets on these matters. A further discussion of

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² For an effective summary of these pamphlet wars, see: Goodrich, *Debating England's Aristocracy in the 1790s: Pamphlets, Polemics and Political Ideas*; Iain Hampsher-Monk, ed., *The Impact of the French Revolution: Texts from Britain in the 1790s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

Tone and Paine's personal links will be undertaken in the final chapter of the thesis, as this concerns Tone's final years when they spent time together in Paris.

From 1789 onwards, the French Revolution had brought sharper focus on Britain's system of government. That is to say, it prompted new discussions about the foundations of political legitimacy, and about the justifications for, and viability of, giving Parliament increased power.²⁷³ As British responses to the French Revolution gathered pace, the discourses of Burke and Paine gained particular attention, with Tone responding in turn. First, Burke's *Reflections* warned against the perils of revolution, especially when based on abstract ideas of individual rights. Though his status as a 'reactionary' should not be over-emphasised, as discussed earlier in the context of Bourke's nuanced biography, Burke's stance on the French Revolution was undoubtedly sharply critical. A year after the publication of *Reflections* in 1790, Paine launched an attack on its principles with his 1791 work, *The Rights of Man*.²⁷⁴ Paine is of particular significance here because of his popularity in Ireland, stemming from his role in pursuing American independence, while Burke was arguably the most significant Irish voice on the French Revolution. In an entry of his memoirs written soon after detailing the foundation of the United Irishmen [1791], Tone commented that "this controversy [the debate between Burke and Paine] and the gigantic event which gave rise to it changed in an instant the politics of Ireland".²⁷⁵ Tellingly, Tone summarised his feelings on the two texts by describing *Reflections* in a negative light as "Mr Burke's famous invective", which had prompted "Paine's reply, which he called the *Rights of Man*".²⁷⁶

Tone was profoundly affected by responses to the French Revolution within Britain. His son, William, editor of his *Life* collection of writings, revealed:

With the whig party [his father] was utterly disgusted. In his opinion, whatever professions they had formerly made were violated by their joining the Government in those extraordinary and illegal measures.²⁷⁷

These "extraordinary and illegal measures" – that is, the restrictions on freedom of speech and the clampdown on radical publications from 1792 onwards – were indeed supported by some sections of

²⁷³ Claeys, *French Revolution Debate in Britain: The Origins of Modern Politics*. For more focus on popular debates, also see: Mark Philp, *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). For the Revolution's impact on radical thought, also see: H.T. Dickinson, *British Radicalism and the French Revolution 1789-1815* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1985).

²⁷⁴ Paine, *The Rights of Man: Being an Answer to Mr Burke's Attack on the French Revolution*.

²⁷⁵ Tone, *Life*, 43.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 42.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 110.

the Whigs.²⁷⁸ When this evidence is viewed alongside Tone's responses to Burke's "invective", it is possible to surmise that he had come to equate the Whigs with Burke's traditionalism. He chose to do so, rather than associating them with the Foxite wing of the party, who had welcomed the French Revolution and the precedents it set for constitutional monarchy, and who did not agree with measures to clampdown on radicalism in Britain. For Tone, moving away from the Whigs, and as a consequence, from mainstream politics, would be an important step in his journey towards rebellion.

Tone supposed that there was a contrast in the reception to Burke and Paine in England and Ireland because, in the former, "Burke had the triumph completely to decide the public", whereas the latter was "an oppressed, insulted, and plundered nation".²⁷⁹ The reality was naturally more complex, as Burke's arguments were not universally accepted either among his own party, or in terms of wider British public opinion. Even so, Paine's acceptance of a new world order, dictated by individual rights rather than traditional authority, proved far more appealing to Tone – though again, Burke was equally opposed to absolutist forms of government. His *Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland* pamphlet of 1791 suggests he saw himself as a representative of the oppressed Irish Catholic population, particularly while he was working on behalf of the Catholic Committee. In discussing the impact of Paine and Burke, Tone notes how the Revolution had divided people between "Aristocrats and the Democrats (epithets borrowed from France), who have ever since been measuring each other's strength".²⁸⁰ Even in describing "Democrats", it is likely he is using this term as fuel for his wider attacks on the state of representative democracy in Britain and Ireland. By opposing "democrats" with "aristocrats", it was a way Tone could implicitly attack the Whigs as the party of the aristocracy, drawing on historical characterisations of their interpretation of the constitution.

The French Revolution – and previously, in Britain, the works of Locke – had provided enormous impetus to the idea that nations bore a responsibility to their citizens, contrary to more traditional modes of thinking which had primarily emphasised duty (whether to the state, or to the sovereign). In this instance, Tone supposed that citizens were willing to put their trust in the Lords and Commons because of an erroneous belief that they served as "a protection from the ruinous effects of an executive power, deposited in a foreign country", when in fact their own members were "bound by no responsibility, and amenable to no tribunal".²⁸¹ Paine's *Rights of Man* was therefore able to stir

²⁷⁸ Those Whigs who began to break away from the Foxite wing of the party began to position themselves as the defenders of Britain against revolutionary France and, by association, Jacobinism. Mori, "Parties and Politics."

²⁷⁹ Tone, *Life*, 43.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Ibid. 278.

Ireland from this acceptance of political norms – which Tone had described as “lethargy” – and this was one significant factor in the growth of radicalism.²⁸²

It is often taken as given that Tone’s ideas were in tune with Paine’s. Indeed, Dunne accurately notes that of all the Enlightenment and revolutionary thinkers, it is only Paine who is properly referenced in Tone’s writings.²⁸³ Paine took an interest in Irish affairs too, writing in 1787:

“The suspicion that England governs Ireland for the purpose of keeping her low, to prevent her becoming her rival in trade and manufactures, will always operate to hold Ireland in a state of sentimental hostility with England.”²⁸⁴

While it has been acknowledged that Tone was interested in Paine and met with him, historians have not examined in detail the nature of Tone’s intellectual engagement with Paine’s works.²⁸⁵ Indeed, the two men shared a common intellectual background in the tradition of ancient republicanism. Paine’s utopianism was based on egalitarian principles, writing in the context of the French Revolution against monarchy and aristocracy and in favour of citizen action against government. Some of Tone’s arguments about civic participation in the nation were similar to Paine’s but had different philosophical foundations. For instance, where Tone in his earlier political years accepted the monarch’s authority over Ireland but expressed concerns at excessive British influence and control in Ireland, one of Paine’s chief criticisms of monarchy in the context of the American revolution was the ‘divine right’ principle and hereditary succession.²⁸⁶ Whereas Paine always held these radical views, Tone moved from conventional Whig arguments towards republicanism.

It is certainly intriguing that Tone cited Paine more than other theorists and is perhaps illuminative of Tone himself believing he was following closely behind in his footsteps. His *Argument on Behalf of*

²⁸² For further reading on the growth of radicalism in Ireland in the 1790s, see: Jim Smyth, “Introduction: The 1798 Rebellion in Its Eighteenth-Century Contexts,” in *Revolution, Counter-Revolution and Union: Ireland in the 1790s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1–21; David Dickson, “The State of Ireland Before 1798,” in *The Great Irish Rebellion of 1798*, ed. Cathal Póirtéir (Dublin: Irish Books and Media, 1998); McBride, “Eighteenth-Century Ireland”; Smyth, *The Men of No Property: Irish Radicals and Popular Politics in the Late Eighteenth Century*.

²⁸³ Dunne, *Colonial Outsider*, 26.

²⁸⁴ Thomas Paine, *Prospects on the Rubicon: Or, An Investigation into the Causes and Consequences of the Politics to Be Agitated at the Meeting of Parliament* (London: J. Debrett, 1787), 635.

²⁸⁵ Cronin and Roche, *Freedom the Wolfe Tone Way*, 75; MacDermot, *Theobald Wolfe Tone and His Times*, 215.

²⁸⁶ Thomas Paine, “Common Sense (1775-6),” in *The Political Writings of Thomas Paine: Secretary to the Committee of Foreign Affairs in the American Revolution*, ed. G Davidson, vol. I (Charleston: G. Davidson, 1824), 26, 38, 39, 53. It should be noted that Paine had a complex relationship with successive French republican governments going forward after he had opposed the execution of Louis XVI, suggesting exile would have been a more progressive option. Carine Lounissi, *Thomas Paine and the French Revolution* (Basingstoke: Springer, 2018), 143.

the Catholics of Ireland of 1791 referenced Paine directly in its very first paragraph, stating that he had himself “argued, therefore, little on the abstract right of the people to reform their Legislature; for, after Paine, who will, or who need, be heard on the subject?”²⁸⁷ This implies he viewed Paine’s ideas on reform as innovative and conclusive, and that contrary to Burke’s protestations, this “abstract right of the people” was indeed all that was needed to justify reform. Burke’s opposition to rapid constitutional change on this basis was well-known even in the early years of the French Revolution, but was re-affirmed to great public attention by *Reflections*, and again by his comments in 1791, in his *Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs*, that “those who truly mean well must be fearful of acting ill”, and that it would be an “ignorant man” who was “sufficiently confident to think he can safely take to pieces, and put together at his pleasure, a moral machine of another guise.”²⁸⁸

However, it seems Tone’s countrymen were more than willing to take on board Paine’s message, since *The Rights of Man* was particularly successful in Ireland. As Small notes, Paine believed he had sold over 40,000 copies in Ireland by the end of 1791, around twice the size of combined sales in England and Scotland.²⁸⁹ From the unusual number of positive references found throughout his various writings, it is possible to suggest that Tone’s own works were heavily influenced by Paine.²⁹⁰ Indeed, it is even noticeable that some of his *Argument* pamphlet takes a similar tone to Paine. That Paine should have served as a model for Tone is hardly surprising, since the *Rights of Man* served as the most popular discussion of individual rights in the 1790s.²⁹¹ At the very least, Tone may have chosen to reference Paine in the knowledge that his ideas were well-received and would therefore make the text convincing to an Irish audience. The impact of what he called “Paine’s book”, or the “Koran of Belfast”, was certainly not lost on him.²⁹²

²⁸⁷ Tone, “An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland,” 1791, 5.

²⁸⁸ Edmund Burke, “An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs,” in *Further Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. Daniel E. Ritchie (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1992).

²⁸⁹ Small, *Political Thought in Ireland 1776-1798: Republicanism, Patriotism, and Radicalism*, 2002, 118.

²⁹⁰ Paine is the most cited thinker throughout Tone’s works (seven times), more than Locke or Molyneux. Swift, referenced explicitly five times, is the only writer referenced nearly as often.

²⁹¹ Paine’s earlier civic republicanism played a key role in shaping the early American republic. See: Robert Lamb, “Rights of Democratic Inclusion and the Virtues of Citizenship,” in *Thomas Paine and the Idea of Human Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 74–111; Michael Durey, “Thomas Paine’s Apostles: Radical Emigrés and the Triumph of Jeffersonian Republicanism,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 662-688, 44, no. 4 (October 1987); Robert Lamb, “Liberty, Equality, and the Boundaries of Ownership: Thomas Paine’s Theory of Property Rights,” *The Review of Politics* 72, no. 3 (2010): 483–511; Brian W. Dotts, “Ploughshares, Politics, and Pedagogy: The Negotiation of Democratic-Republicanism and the Loss of Civic Sentiment,” in *The Political Education of Democratus: Negotiating Civic Virtue during the Early Republic* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2012), 1–51.

²⁹² Journey to Belfast, October 1791 Tone, *Life*, 141.

Although there has been speculation that Paine visited Ireland, it was in Paris that Tone first spent time with him.²⁹³ Their meeting is recounted in Tone's diary entry of March 1797, at a time when he was seeking French aid for an Irish revolution.²⁹⁴ Paine was effectively in exile after charges of seditious libel were brought against him for the second part of the *Rights of Man* and he also met with another United Irishman, Lord Edward Fitzgerald, though the organisation ultimately decided against pursuing Paine's assistance at that time.²⁹⁵ Elliott has done substantial work on these networks, noting Paine's support for an expedition that would surprise Britain.²⁹⁶ However, Tone was evidently well-versed in Paine's work several years before their first meetings. The Dublin Society of United Irishmen had even made Paine an honorary member in 1791 soon after its founding, which further explains Tone's staunch defence of his ally three years later – at which time Paine was coming under attack and was in exile in France:

What is the mischief attending this theory of Paine? That there can be no settled government? Certainly nothing was ever more unfair than this deduction, nor more false in fact. Paine's meaning is so obvious, that it must be something worse than dullness which can misunderstand it. It is clearly this, that no generation is so far bound by a precedent one, as not to be able, *when circumstances require*, to break the tie.²⁹⁷

Crucially, in suggesting that “when circumstances require”, the “tie” could be broken, Tone interpreted Paine's message as a justification of revolution, which would become important in his later years. These ideas would be cemented by his time in America (August 1795-February 1796), and the prominence there of Lockean discourse on justified rebellion if governments were not fulfilling their part of the social contract: delivering the rights of citizens. Indeed, Paine himself is likely to have gained much of the understanding of his own theory of rights from his time in America in the 1780s, even if he harnessed Locke's ideas and took them in a much more radical direction than Locke had originally intended.²⁹⁸

²⁹³ M.D. Conway makes this claim in: Thomas Paine, *Thomas Paine, 1737-1809: Et La Revolution Dans Les Deux Mondes* (1900), ed. Moncure Daniel Conway, trans. Felix Rabbe (Montana: Kessinger Publishing, 2009), 198; Ann Thompson, meanwhile, states there is insufficient evidence to prove whether Paine visited Ireland one way or another: Ann Thomson, “Thomas Paine and the United Irishmen,” *Études Irlandaises* 17, no. 1 (1991): 109–10.

²⁹⁴ Wolfe Tone, “Diary Entry,” March 3, 1797, Tone papers, MS 2049, f. 210, Trinity College Dublin.

²⁹⁵ William Drennan, Samuel McTier, and Martha Drennan McTier, *The Drennan Letters: Being a Selection from the Correspondence Which Passed Between William Drennan, M.D. and His Brother-in-Law and Sister, Samuel and Martha McTier, During the Years 1776-1819*, ed. D.A. Chart (His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1931), 129.

²⁹⁶ Elliott, *Partners in Revolution: The United Irishmen and France*, 59–60.

²⁹⁷ Tone, “Statement of the Situation of Ireland, Found on Jackson's Arrest, April 1794,” 397.

²⁹⁸ Robert Lamb, “Cosmopolitanism and the Rights of Nations,” in *Thomas Paine and the Idea of Human Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 152–79.

However, in spite of the fact that Tone shared some of Paine's broader radical ideas, a closer examination of the parallels between them – which has not been undertaken previously leading to this possible overemphasis on Paine's influence – shows that there were important differences in their respective interpretations of important political concepts. Most of Paine's arguments in favour of property, and indeed wider political rights, derived from his understanding of the state of nature. In *The Rights of Man*, for example, Paine had suggested that man needed to be traced to its very origins to find its natural state. One of Paine's arguments against Burke's ancient constitutionalism was that "those who reason by precedents drawn from antiquity respecting the rights of man ... do not go far enough into antiquity. They do not go the whole way".²⁹⁹

Whereas Paine believed in a state of nature where oppression did not exist, Tone did not normally utilise this type of rhetoric. Rather than discussing the state of nature, he felt Catholics needed to actively strive for liberty. In one of Tone's lesser known writings from 1792, his *Reply to the Protestant Interest in Ireland, Ascertained*, not published at the time, he made a clear distinction between natural rights and the right to be represented, making the former almost immaterial as "it is not the natural rights of man, but the political rights of citizens that we are to argue upon".³⁰⁰ This is a more nuanced argument than he is credited for, for instance by Elliott, who argues that "his answer to *The Protestant Interest* reveals him not as a sophisticated political thinker, but as a politicised individual frustrated by political rhetoric which was frequently at odds with everyday reality".³⁰¹ Tone responded to the fact that Catholics were effectively excluded from Parliament as a result of the 1691 Oath Act, which also ensured Catholic peers were excluded from the House of Lords, with the comment that they had "been actually in bonds for one hundred years".³⁰² Instead of being able to "claim" their natural rights, "they come, with at least sufficient humility to petition the legislature, and they advance no right; they *request*, only".³⁰³ Tone implied Catholics ought to shoulder the responsibility of enacting political change, his references to natural rights only occasional. Regardless of whether people were inherently free, what mattered was their tendency to bear oppression.

²⁹⁹ Paine, *The Rights of Man: Being an Answer to Mr Burke's Attack on the French Revolution*, 47.

³⁰⁰ Tone, "Reply to a Pamphlet Entitled 'The Protestant Interest in Ireland Ascertained', January 1792."

³⁰¹ Elliott, *Wolfe Tone*, 159.

³⁰² 'An Act for the Abrogating the Oath of Supremacy in Ireland and Appointing Other Oaths' – The Act was about more than an oath of allegiance to William III, also requiring the rejection of Catholic doctrines, including transubstantiation, and denied the authority of the pope. See: McGrath, *Ireland and Empire, 1692-1770*, 18–21.

³⁰³ Tone, "Reply to a Pamphlet Entitled 'The Protestant Interest in Ireland Ascertained', January 1792," 176. This could, however, also be read as a similar argument to Paine's on the civic duty of the American people.

It is a common, yet a very gross falsehood, to say the people are prone to change. They are not. They always bear oppression as long, and longer, than they ought.³⁰⁴

Whereas Tone and Paine have less in common than is usually assumed, the opposite is the case with Tone and Burke. On the matter of Catholic rights, Tone was in fact in agreement with Burke, who had stated his opposition to the penal laws.³⁰⁵ Yet this was unlikely to be the direct result of Burke's influence, since Tone's plans for Catholic 'emancipation' were long-held. After all, this partially explained his dissatisfaction with the 1782 constitution, which he felt had made insufficient progress in that area. It is this belief that makes his *Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland* pamphlet so important, as it came to define his early years of political activism, in the midst of what was a pressing issue in Ireland. For instance, on the question of whether Catholic loyalties lay with the Pope rather than the monarch, he claimed Catholic attitudes were shaped by "persecution". It was this that bound "the Irish Catholic to his Priest, and the Priest to the Pope; the bond of union is drawn tighter by oppression".³⁰⁶ It seems likely that Tone specifically mentions the relationship between Catholics and priests because of the British state's long-held suspicion regarding the latter. The Oath of Abjuration, to which he also alludes in a previous passage above, had been expanded in the 1704 *Act to Prevent the Further Growth of Popery*, so that it included Catholic priests, who were required to swear allegiance to the monarch, at this time Queen Anne (1702-1707). With the vast majority of priests in Ireland having refused, they were accused of disloyalty and were therefore objects of suspicion.

As the decade wore on, and Tone's relationship with Paine's ideas remained positive, in contrast his increasing distrust of Burke may have been influenced in part by the frustration borne of his encounters with the Burke family. His diaries reveal that his associate John Keogh, with whom he worked on the Catholic Committee (referred to in these passages as 'Gog'), met with Richard Burke, son of Edmund, on 5th September 1792.³⁰⁷ Tone writes: "Agree that Gog [Keogh] shall go into a full exposition with Burke, of the grounds of the displeasure of the Catholics." Keogh was a silk merchant who had amassed wealth and status from his trade, which made him an important ally on the Catholic question. The

³⁰⁴ 'To the Grand Jury of the City and County of Londonderry, for the Summer Assizes, 1792; Tone, "Statement of the Situation of Ireland, Found on Jackson's Arrest, April 1794," 397.

³⁰⁵ Edmund Burke, "A Letter from a Distinguished English Commoner" (Dublin: Thomas M'Donnell, 1791). For more on Burke's opposition to the penal laws, see: Sato, "Edmund Burke's Views of Irish History"; Edmund Burke, "Fragments of a Tract Relative to the Laws Against Popery in Ireland (1765)," in *Edmund Burke: Essential Works and Speeches*, ed. Peter Stanlis (New York: Routledge, 2017); Michael W. McConnell, "Establishment and Toleration in Edmund Burke's 'Constitution of Freedom,'" *The Supreme Court Review*, 1995, 393-462; Daniel O'Neill, *Edmund Burke and the Conservative Logic of Empire* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016).

³⁰⁶ Tone, "An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland," 1791, 23.

³⁰⁷ Tone, *Life*, 180.

meeting party came away dissatisfied with the Burke family as a whole, accusing them of corruption – “Edmund wants to get another 2,000 guineas for his Son if he can – dirty work!” – and criticising Richard’s manner: “His impudence is beyond all I have ever known”. Tone did not believe these talks with Burke yielded much success at any rate, an entry the following day reading: “Burke as mad as the devil”.³⁰⁸

Tone did seek to defend Burke in his Paris meeting with Paine in 1797, shocked by his new companion’s suggestion that Burke’s depression had arisen from the success of *The Rights of Man* rather than his son’s death. Tone’s respectfully disagreed, cautioning that he had “seen himself the workings of a father’s grief on his spirit”.³⁰⁹ Yet, in political matters, Tone had much less time for Burke, attributing the success of *Reflections* to the British public’s “prejudices” and “unconquerable hatred” towards France.³¹⁰ Burke’s “triumph”, Tone argued, had come about because he had merely confirmed pre-existing views as Britain “sickened at the prospect of the approaching liberty and happiness of that mighty nation [France]”.³¹¹

Drawing on a common accusation, Tone alleged that Britain’s primary concern, “as merchants”, were “the probable effects which the energy of regenerated France might have on their commerce”.³¹² Such a criticism of Britain’s overly commercial outlook should be understood as part of a wider republican tradition, dating back at least to Machiavelli’s account of the fall of Rome.³¹³ In an English context, this meant that commerce had corrupted the political sphere to the extent whereby it had become the main focus, rather than the “liberty and happiness” that had supposedly been achieved in France.³¹⁴ In this way, Tone was able to project his criticism of Britain’s policies in Ireland onto England’s attitudes towards France, another instance of him viewing contemporary politics through an Irish lens.

Both Paine and Burke had a huge influence on political thought in Britain and Ireland towards the end of the eighteenth century and while it is the former who is typically acknowledged as having the biggest impact on Tone, the reality appears to be that he took in different ideas from both.³¹⁵ His

³⁰⁸ Tone, “Statement of the Situation of Ireland, Found on Jackson’s Arrest, April 1794,” 180.

³⁰⁹ Tone, “Diary Entry,” March 3, 1797.

³¹⁰ Tone, “Statement of the Situation of Ireland, Found on Jackson’s Arrest, April 1794,” 43.

³¹¹ Tone, *Life*, 43.

³¹² *Ibid.*

³¹³ Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy (1531)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 207.

³¹⁴ Mark Philp, “English Republicanism in the 1790s,” *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 6, no. 3 (1998): 235–62; David Armitage, “Empire and Liberty: A Republican Dilemma,” in *Republicanism: The Values of Republicanism in Early Modern Europe: A Shared European Heritage*, ed. Martin van Gelderen and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 29–47; M.M. Goldsmith, “Liberty, Virtue, and the Rule of Law 1689–1770,” in *Republicanism, Liberty, and Commercial Society, 1649–1776*, ed. David Wootton (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 197–233.

³¹⁵ Dunne, *Colonial Outsider*, 26.

understanding of the role of the people in shaping government is recognisable as being similar to Paine's, though it must be said they were common among numerous eighteenth-century reformist thinkers. Thus, Tone is shown to be a rather conventional eighteenth-century thinker who read common reformist and radical tropes through the prism of the Irish context, rather than the harbinger of nineteenth century nationalism he has been depicted as in popular culture. Even if he was not generally receptive to Burke's respect for traditional authority, they found a common cause in the area of Catholic relief. The evidence therefore supports the idea that even if Tone's ideas were not groundbreaking, he amalgamated different strands of thinking and adapted them for an Irish audience, warming to Burke's ancient constitutionalism, but also finding in Paine similar ideas to his own about the duty of citizens to play an active part in the political nation.

Conclusion

The first significant developments in Tone's political thought came during his time in Britain between 1787 and 1788. The Glorious Revolution and regency crisis had paved the way for the powers of the Crown to be questioned, and as a consequence, led to renewed debates about whether the 1782 Constitution had granted the Irish parliament sufficient freedom. Such events had fundamentally altered the links between Britain and Ireland, and this chapter has considered how they affected Tone's ideas. It can be concluded that Tone's writings in this period of his life were largely a response to that political backdrop and reflected his views that the existing political system in Ireland was unrepresentative of its wider population. In addition, his writings demonstrate that his understanding of these events was shaped by a classical republican outlook, which held that governments should be dependent on political virtue, and that citizens had a duty and responsibility to shape their own institutions. This ancient republican language permeates all of his political writings in the period, as he emphasised wisdom, national spirit, and virtue - and found all of these to be lacking in the current status quo.

By examining *A Review of the Conduct of Administration and Spanish War!* as well as some of his shorter essays and other unpublished notes and works, we have seen how Tone was able to follow in an Irish Patriot literary tradition that attacked Westminster's legislating for Ireland. The likes of Swift, Lucas and Molyneux, themselves fed on a diet of Lockean discourse about rights, had argued for Irish MPs to be given increased power, particularly over vital domestic affairs such as trade and manufacturing. Tone had read these examples, along with more contemporary works such as the pamphlets of Paine and Burke and subsequently crafted his own amalgamation of ideas, as he saw them to be relevant to 1790s Ireland.

It is evident in his *Review* that Tone did not believe either of the current parliaments to be fit for purpose; their MPs did not embody republican virtue as they did not work towards a common good, nor were Catholics able to enjoy full citizenship by taking part in the political process. Since the representative system had not been reformed in the wake of 1782, the ‘independence’ Ireland had achieved was nothing more than symbolic. As the constitution continued to be debated, Tone found it difficult to align himself with Patriots back in Dublin, who appeared content with the continued restrictions on the Catholic masses. For all their grievances against the parliamentary system, concern over the lack of Catholic voting rights was not universal within the Irish Whigs either. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that in the period Tone’s attachment to the English Whigs began to wane. He could not fully align himself with either side of a divided party, even if he was broadly more in tune with Foxite Whigs and generally – though not entirely – opposed to Burkean ancient constitutionalism as a way of interpreting the Glorious Revolution. The limitations of Grattan’s parliament were further exposed by the threat of war with Spain over the Nootka crisis. In *Spanish War!* Tone easily picks apart claims that Ireland’s parliament could stray from decisions made by the British Crown and parliament, and over a matter as significant as whether to enter a conflict serving only Britain’s commercial and imperial interests.

Thus, Tone’s engagement with British and Irish politics laid important foundations for ideas that would later be refashioned. It has often been assumed he was a child of the French Revolution, and he did initially understand it through the prisms of Burke and Paine’s arguments about individual rights. However, his ideas are in fact better understood as a mixture of several different schools of reformism and radicalism. Of course, Tone already had a grounding in such discourse thanks to his studies of Locke and reflections of similar ideas in the Irish Protestant Patriot tradition. Tone’s writings showed him to be largely at odds with Burke, yet there were moments when he believed Ireland could benefit from looking to the historical roots of its government, and from past examples of virtuous societies. More often, he was inspired by Paine’s arguments for reform and, in the wake of the French Revolution, he believed Ireland might be ripe for major constitutional change.

Tone ultimately stands out as an intriguing figure in the wider political backdrop of England and Ireland, the two countries where he spent the late 1780s. In an England still riddled with the fear of republicanism over a century on from its anti-monarchical experiment, there were growing disagreements about the roots of political legitimacy, about Parliament’s power in relation to the Crown, and about whether limited democracy would threaten the ancient traditions of the constitution. From his experience of contemporary British politics and his reading of Patriot writers, Tone concluded that for Britain and Ireland to maintain any sort of meaningful relationship, fundamental large-scale reform was needed. At the beginning of his time in England, he had been an advocate of limited reform. The more he witnessed the flawed relationship between Britain and Ireland, the

further he veered towards radicalism. Hence, Tone interpreted subsequent events, including the French Revolution, not simply through the lens of the sceptical Enlightenment as has so often been assumed, but through several different philosophical and political traditions deeply rooted in Britain and Ireland.³¹⁶

³¹⁶ The prominent nationalist politician John Hume, in his book, described Tone's orchestration of the 1798 rebellion as "based on the applications of the principles of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution". John Hume, *A New Ireland: Politics, Peace, and Reconciliation* (Colorado: Roberts Rinehart, 2000), 11.

Chapter Two: Tone on Citizenship and the Nation

Tone's political thought has widely been viewed as a precursor to the Irish nationalism that would emerge in the nineteenth century, Elliott describing him as the "recognised founder of Irish republican nationalism".³¹⁷ With his life (1763-1798) having coincided with the rise of a romantic era of national sentiment, it has often been assumed that his arguments for Irish political independence from Britain were based on cultural and ethnic senses of national identity. It is a viewpoint that has shaped Tone's image in popular culture, and historians have not challenged it fully. Indeed, many commentators on Tone have even subscribed to this view. In the 1980s, the Irish essayist Hubert Butler was still talking of "nationalism, as Tone conceived it, that is to say a concentration of affection for the land in which you live and the people with whom you share it".³¹⁸ Even Dunne's revisionist account still stated that "crucial aspects of Tone's thought were highly abstract, even romantic", as they carried "the optimism of the revolutionary era".³¹⁹ Other historians have, however, attempted to reassess this consensus, starting with Giovanni Costigan, who commented in an article on romantic Ireland that national figures like Tone and Robert Emmet (1778-1803), leader of the 1803 rebellion, "though ready for death, were, like the rest of the United Irishmen, essentially men of the eighteenth century to whom the mystique of the nation was unknown".³²⁰ Elliott has since also pointed out that while "his ideas spanned Enlightened and romantic traditions", he was more a "typical eighteenth-century man of letters".³²¹ This chapter will build on such reassessments to re-historicise Tone's ideas of the nation and understanding of Irish identity. Moving beyond the temptation to approach Tone as a 'great man' in Irish history, here the aim is to explore the intellectual roots and political influences that shaped his ideas, and to use them as a window into understanding more about changing concepts of identity in Ireland in this period.

'National identity' is a complex notion, and Irish national identity arguably even more so. As Vincent Comerford has pointed out, even by the mid-nineteenth century, when Irish nationalists like the Young Irelanders Thomas Davis (1814-1845) and John Mitchel (1815-1875) had developed "a theory of Irish nationality to comprehend Irish people of all affiliations, it was in fact "a prescription for the ideal rather than a description of the actual".³²² Richard English adds a further caution on the complexities of Irish identity, adding that the fact the Catholic population was "not ethnically

³¹⁷ Elliott, *Wolfe Tone*, 1.

³¹⁸ Hubert Butler, *Wolfe Tone and the Common Name of Irishman* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1985), 13.

³¹⁹ Dunne, *Colonial Outsider*, 26.

³²⁰ Giovanni Costigan, "Romantic Nationalism: Ireland and Europe," *Irish University Review* 3, no. 2 (Autumn 1973): 142.

³²¹ Elliott, *Wolfe Tone*, 4.

³²² R.V. Comerford, "Nation, Nationalism, and the Irish Language," in *Perspectives on Irish Nationalism*, ed. Thomas E. Hachey and Lawrence J. McCaffrey (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2015), 21.

homogenous”, means that the narrative of ‘natives’ opposing Protestant ‘settlers’ needs deconstructing.³²³ It was precisely this lack of clarity, this chapter will argue, which opened the door for Tone to expound a sense of ‘Irishness’ linked to allegiance to the state, rather than ethnic, historic, or cultural ties. It will further be suggested that Tone’s seeming lack of interest in an Irish national identity based on culture and ethnicity must be understood in light of the republican-inspired emphasis he placed on citizenship.

While some scholars have already pointed to the United Irishmen’s interpretation of Irish society, one focused on unity and against sectarian divisions, this previous work does not focus on Tone specifically, or discuss how he conceptualized Irish identity.³²⁴ While Tone deployed the word “nation” relatively frequently, the writings examined in this chapter demonstrate that it was the issue of citizenship which formed the basis of his arguments, and the allegiance of citizens to the state that determined his conception of ‘Irishness’.³²⁵ This explains, to some degree at least, his attempts to overcome religious divisions and unite different denominations into one cause, despite not necessarily sharing a unified cultural, ethnic or religious identity.

When he returned to Ireland following almost two years of study in London (from 1787 to the end of 1788), Tone had started to engage in politics in a more organised way than he had in Britain, writing much more regularly and following the activities of the Irish Whigs keenly. By 1791, he would co-found the Society of the United Irishmen in order to agitate for parliamentary reform and Catholic relief, forging some of the associations with Dublin radicals that would continue until his death. It is Tone’s understanding of citizenship in the years between 1788 and 1794 that will form the specific focus of this chapter. Indeed, this was the period of his life when he articulated these ideas most clearly. His focus upon these types of questions appears to have waned after he was forced into exile in May 1795, though some references made in his later years will also be discussed. Analysing a series of pamphlets and essays will provide insight into his interpretation of citizenship. First, his two memoranda on the *Sandwich Islands* (1788 and 1790) will be considered, as he attempted to convince Prime Minister William Pitt of his plans for a republican utopia in the Pacific.³²⁶ At first glance, these documents and their colonial implications present a surprising contrast to Tone’s later ideas, particularly as they are designed to further Britain’s imperial interests. At the same time, this also

³²³ Richard English, *Irish Freedom: A History of Nationalism in Ireland* (London: Pan Macmillan, 2008), 64.

³²⁴ Kevin Whelan comments that the crux of the United Irish ideology was that “divisions in Irish society were artificial”. Whelan, *The Tree of Liberty: Radicalism, Catholicism and the Construction of Irish Identity 1760-1830*, 51.

³²⁵ Tone uses the word ‘nation’ 11 times throughout his writings. Usages include ‘the Irish nation’ and “a nation, not a province”. See: Tone, *Life*, 278, 287, 316, 656.

³²⁶ Tone, “Proposal Submitted to William Pitt for the Establishment of a Military Colony in the Sandwich Islands”; Wolfe Tone, “Renewed Proposal for the Establishment of a Military Colony in the Sandwich Islands,” December 1790, PRO, HO 50/365, Public Record Office, London.

means they provide particularly insightful evidence of his early vision for a model republican society, defended by its citizen-soldiers.

By 1790, Tone had become more inward-looking. He had moved away from wider constitutional questions about Britain and Ireland and was now seeking to determine what tied the latter's majority population – that is, its Catholics – to the state. It is a theme that arises in two short, complementary essays written in 1790, *On the state of Ireland in 1720*, and *On the state of Ireland in 1790*.³²⁷ The former dealt with attacks on Irish national character, countering them by listing a number of Patriot grievances, including Wood's half-pence as discussed by Swift in *Drapier's Letters*.³²⁸ The latter lamented the failings of the 1782 constitution in securing legislative independence. Tone insisted that the British executive's domination of the Dublin parliament did not allow Irish policies to be directed by the wisdom of the people.³²⁹ This idea was echoed in another of his essays, *On the necessity of domestic union* (c. 1790-91), which argued that Ireland was unable to oppose British legislation effectively because much of its population were "slaves", thereby making it impossible to counter a "united" England.³³⁰ A similar reasoning runs through his most famous pamphlet, *An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland* (1791), in which he disputed Protestant fears that allowing Catholics political rights would eventually lead to a Catholic-dominated Parliament, following in the footsteps of other Catholic relief campaigners.³³¹

In 1792, a further three of his writings focused on the Catholic question, beginning with his 'short answer' to a text by an unidentified author warning Catholics against depending on Protestant allies to help them achieve reform.³³² In the summer of that year, Tone then made a record of his visit to the north of Ireland, where he met members of the agrarian groups the Catholic Defenders and Peep o'Day Boys.³³³ As part of his work for the General Committee of the Catholics, he sought to find a resolution to the sectarian violence which was heightening tensions between Protestant and Catholics. Finally, in November 1792, he penned a short *Address to the Roman Catholics of Ireland* to counteract the view Catholics were to blame for their own lack of representation as they had not

³²⁷ Tone, "On the State of Ireland in 1720"; Wolfe Tone, "On the State of Ireland in 1790," 1790, Tone papers, MS 2041, f. 13-16, Trinity College Dublin.

³²⁸ Tone, "On the State of Ireland in 1720"; Swift, *Drapier's Letters* (1724-5).

³²⁹ Tone, "On the State of Ireland in 1720"; Tone, "On the State of Ireland in 1790."

³³⁰ Tone, "On the Necessity of Domestic Union."

³³¹ Tone, "An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland,".

³³² Wolfe Tone, "A Short Answer to a 'Brief Caution to the Roman Catholics of Ireland' [By a Liberty Boy] - 1792," in Tone, *Life*.

³³³ John Hutton was one of several of Tone's pseudonyms, this one given to him by fellow United Irishmen Thomas Russell. Wolfe Tone, "Journal of the Proceedings of John Hutton Esq on His Third Journey to the North of Ireland, Including His Artful Negotiations with the Peep o'day Boys and Sundry Peers of the Realm - Also His Valorous Entry into and Famous Retreat out of the City of Rathfriland [1792]," in *Life*, 161-91.

sufficiently resisted their suppression. The failure of previous reform movements to address these issues was a major factor, therefore, in Tone's own path towards more radical methods.³³⁴

The sources outlined above therefore allow a clearer picture of Tone's ideas to emerge, ultimately defined by his understanding of the relationship between citizens and the state. Given that this relationship was a central focus of his political thought, in its final section, this chapter will discuss his eventual shift towards revolution. This change of heart also appears to have been a response to the clampdown on radicalism in Britain and Ireland in the mid-1790s.³³⁵ Tone was affected personally when his summary, *A Statement on the situation of Ireland* (April 1794), was found in possession of Reverend William Jackson, a radical preacher who had sought to determine whether Ireland was receptive to a French-backed rebellion.³³⁶

This chapter will explore the main themes found in Tone's writings at this time. Chiefly, that allegiance to the state was determined by republican notions of civic duty, not religion, culture, or nationality; and secondly, that civic virtue was more potent a force than any of those which divided Ireland. It will be shown that Tone's stance should be understood in the context of the rich history of Patriot opposition to Westminster legislating for Ireland, wider European debates about identity, and the complex religious divisions in Ireland, all of which informed not only Tone's, but most contemporary discussions about allegiance to the Irish state.

National identity in Ireland

As we have seen, a long tradition of 'Patriot' thought associated with writers such as Swift, and which called for Ireland to have more control over its own political and economic affairs, had informed Tone's views.³³⁷ Yet his thinking was also influenced by new ideas about national identity, which were being debated with increasing fervour elsewhere in Europe. There were a number of alternative

³³⁴ Wolfe Tone, "An Address to the Roman Catholics of Ireland," November 1792, Tone Papers, MS 3806, ff. 4-16, Trinity College Dublin.

³³⁵ Government legislation was introduced with the aim of monitoring suspected radicals. This included the Gunpowder Act of 1793, which had encouraged more thorough searches to prevent unlicensed keeping of weaponry, and the Convention Act of the same year, which had banned unlawful assemblies and petitions on behalf of the people.

³³⁶ Tone, "Statement of the Situation of Ireland, Found on Jackson's Arrest, April 1794."

³³⁷ On Swift's understanding of Anglo-Irish identity see: Virginia La Grand, "Notes from a Native Son: Swift's Intelligencer," in *Anglo-Irish Identities, 1571-1845*, ed. David A. Valone and Jill Marie Bradbury (Bucknell University Press, 2008), 143-65; Robert Mahony, "The Early Biographers: Preserving Mixed Impressions," in *Jonathan Swift: The Irish Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 25-46. For more on Protestant Anglo-Irish identity, also read: Jim Smyth, "'Like Amphibious Animals': Irish Protestants, Ancient Britons, 1691-1707," *The Historical Journal* 36, no. 4 (1993): 785-97; David Hayton, "Anglo-Irish Attitudes - Shifting Perceptions of National Identity," in *The Anglo-Irish Experience, 1680-1730: Religion, Identity and Patriotism* (Boydell Press, 2012), 25-49; T Barnard, "Crises of Identity among Irish Protestants, 1641-1685," *Past and Present*, no. 127 (May 1990): 39-42.

understandings of identity from which Tone's interpretation could be distinguished. On the one hand, Rousseau (1712-1778) had broken new ground in distinguishing 'the people' of any one country as a cohesive unit and the only source of political legitimacy. Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803), on the other, had posed the question of who 'the people' really were, laying the foundations for a very different conceptualisation of the nation to the French civic model.³³⁸ Herder's answer – that nationality could be defined along ethnic lines and people could be grouped by shared history, language and culture – was particularly difficult to apply to Ireland given its peculiarities. For example, the Irish language had been in demise since the mid-point of the eighteenth century, as bilingualism increased and the English language grew in importance as it was used by the middle and upper classes.³³⁹ The use of Irish was discouraged by both the Catholic Church and the British administration within Ireland. Thus, while language may have been an important element in establishing *some* community and group identities, it could not be used widely enough as the core force of unifying the Irish people, not least because monoglot Irish speakers did not have the same access to print culture.

Religious allegiance played an important role in determining individual and group identities, another factor which Tone's version of national identity sought to overcome. During Tone's life, the most notable factor in this reliance on religious allegiances as an indicator of identity was the sectarian backdrop of the Williamite Wars of 1680-1691.³⁴⁰ That period of conflict had shifted the balance of

³³⁸ Matthew Bernard Levinger, *Enlightened Nationalism: The Transformation of Prussian Political Culture, 1806-1848* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Carlton J.H. Hayes, "Contributions of Herder to the Doctrine of Nationalism," *The American Historical Review* 32, no. 4 (July 1927): 719–36; Lloyd S. Kramer, *Nationalism in Europe and America: Politics, Cultures, and Identities since 1775* (University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Frederick M. Barnard, *Herder's Social and Political Thought: From Enlightenment to Nationalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965); Friedrich Meinecke, "Nation, State, and Cosmopolitanism in the Development of the German Idea of the National State," in *Cosmopolitanism and the National State*, trans. Robert B. Kimber (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 7–203; Michael Palumbo and William Oswald Shanahan, eds., *Nationalism: Essays in Honor of Louis L. Snyder* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1981); Derek Hastings, *Nationalism in Modern Europe: Politics, Identity, and Belonging Since the French Revolution* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018).

³³⁹ It should be noted that use of the Irish language differed in various parts of the country, for example remaining stronger in the west than the east by the later eighteenth century. However, on the broader point about the language's demise, a starting point is: Daniel Corkery, *The Hidden Ireland - A Study of Gaelic Munster in the Eighteenth Century* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1924). Corkery's focus is Irish-language poetry and its oral traditions, contending that Gaelic writings restricted to manuscripts rather than published works. Corkery's view has begun to be challenged in modern scholarship, for example by: Wes Hamrick, "The Public Sphere and Eighteenth-Century Ireland," *New Hibernia Review / Iris Éireannach Nua* 18, no. 4 (Winter 2014): 87–100. For further reading on the complexities of bilingualism in eighteenth-century Ireland, also see: Joseph Theodoor Leerssen, *Hidden Ireland, Public Sphere* (Galway: Arlen House for the Centre for Irish Studies, 2002); Nicholas M. Wolf, "Identities," in *An Irish-Speaking Island: State, Religion, Community, and the Linguistic Landscape in Ireland, 1770–1870* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2014), 21–109; Aidan Doyle, "Two Irelands, Two Languages (1700-1800)," in *A History of the Irish Language: From the Norman Invasion to Independence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 81–107.

³⁴⁰ These issues could also be traced back further, for example to the Nine Years' War, but in Tone's life, the Williamite Wars were more prominent in Ireland's collective memory. The Nine Years' war – or 'Tyrone's Rebellion' – was contested by an Irish alliance, most prominently featuring Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone, against

land ownership and political power further in favour of the Protestant minority. Paradoxically, a sense of Irish identity among some of Ireland's Protestant ruling class would also emerge out of that period, because of increasing British attempts to intervene in Irish affairs in the wake of the Glorious Revolution. In part due to the effects of the penal laws, the ruling class in Ireland were made up of Protestants who subsequently had a greater stake in the Irish political sphere – and whether or not Britain had influence over it. By the time Tone was operating, a sense of 'otherness' surrounding Ireland's Catholics was being brought into the spotlight by the ongoing battle for Catholic Relief. Tone joined the General Committee of the Catholics in 1791, arguing against the exclusion of Catholics from the political sphere. A series of Catholic Relief Acts, in 1771, 1778, and 1791 had initially centred on undoing the penal laws in the area of land ownership, but gradually began to dismantle laws against Catholics holding office.³⁴¹ For Tone's purposes of transforming Catholics into fully-fledged republican citizens, the Act of 1793 proved a significant milestone: they were now able to vote in some parliamentary and municipal elections if they rented or possessed land worth forty shillings, and it brought in fewer restrictions on land ownership in the first place.³⁴² Yet while Catholics were admitted to the franchise in 1793, they were still not granted full civil rights and still could not sit in parliament.

The issue of sectarianism was immensely widespread and entrenched, not just at a parliamentary level.³⁴³ During the 1780s, Ireland had witnessed increased agitation in the north, as agrarian societies were pitted against one another in sectarian violence that became known as the 'Armagh Disturbances'.³⁴⁴ The Presbyterian Peep o'Day Boys engaged in more than a decade of sporadic conflict against the Catholic Defenders, ostensibly 'enforcing' the penal laws by raiding Catholic homes to confiscate weapons. Although Tone's campaign on behalf of Irish Catholics may have found its roots, at least intellectually, in either the Protestant Dissenting tradition, or potentially even the French revolutionary discussions of natural rights, he also hoped to counter sectarian violence on the ground in order to unite Irishmen in campaigning for legislative independence from Britain.³⁴⁵

English rule amidst the Tudor conquest of Ireland. Opposition to the spread of Protestantism in Ireland was a defining factor of the conflict. Hiram Morgan, "The Outbreak of War," in *Tyrone's Rebellion: The Outbreak of the Nine Years War in Tudor Ireland* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1999), 167–93.

³⁴¹ This came about as part of the Treaty of Limerick following the conclusion of the Williamite wars and sought to ensure the dominance of Protestantism.

³⁴² Desmond Keenan, *The Grail of Catholic Emancipation 1793 to 1829* (Indiana: Xlibris, 2002), 66–67.

³⁴³ It should be noted that many of the restrictions on Catholics often did not apply to Protestant Dissenters, thanks to the Toleration Act of 1719.

³⁴⁴ Miller, "The Armagh Troubles, 1784-95"; Miller, *Peep o'Day Boys and Defenders: Selected Documents on the Disturbances in County Armagh, 1784-1796*; Neal Garnham, "1785-93: Indecision and an Act," in *The Militia in Eighteenth-Century Ireland: In Defence of the Protestant Interest* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2012), 142–64; Farrell, "Trouble in Armagh, 1784-1798."

³⁴⁵ On the concept of natural rights and its use in the French Revolution, see: Jonathan Israel, "The Rights of Man: Summer and Autumn 1789," in *Revolutionary Ideas: An Intellectual History of the French Revolution from The Rights of Man to Robespierre* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); Baker, "Political

As previously seen, the Irish political scene had informed his views on citizens' right to challenge the status quo. This was exacerbated by a wider crackdown on radicalism, as Britain sought to contain the spread of radical ideas throughout Europe by limiting secret societies and debating groups, many of which they feared held seditious views. Britain's century-old anxieties about republicanism came to a head in the 1793 declaration of war with France. In Britain, it was the year of the 'Treason Trials', three of the most high-profile cases involving John Thelwall, Thomas Hardy, and John Horne Tooke, who were charged with high treason. The impact of these cases, even more so than others which were abandoned, on grassroots radicalism cannot be overstated. The United Irishmen were forced underground, at which point they began to follow more closely the French model of secular, 'total' republicanism, as opposed to demanding reform along the lines of a constitutional monarchy.

Through an emphasis on the idea of national virtue and his embracing of all religious denominations, Tone emphasised that the links between the state and its citizens were not necessarily dependent on ethnic or cultural factors in the way that national identity was starting to be understood elsewhere in Europe. His understanding of Ireland as a nation with a right to self-determination was based on a civic sense of national identity, even if he did recognise specific national traits. In this way, he sought to bridge the gap between the peoples of Ireland, divided by religion and not united, either, by other obvious indicators of identity such as language which would become popular pointers of nationalism in the nineteenth century. Thus, instead of adhering to growing contemporary romantic ideas about the nation, he attempted to forge not a new sense of 'Irishness', but rather build upon those Irish traits which he already saw in evidence, such as "gallantry" and "spirit" to foster the emergence of republican virtue.

Tone, citizenship, and allegiance to the state (1788-1791)

The first instance in which it is possible to gauge Tone's ideas about citizenship is from his 1788 Sandwich Islands memorandum, written during his time in London studying law at Middle Temple.³⁴⁶ A second, edited copy was drafted in 1790, at the height of the Nootka Sound dispute. That issue would also be the focus of his 1790 *Spanish War!* pamphlet, which would reiterate his

Languages of the French Revolution"; Keith Baker, "French Political Thought at the Accession of Louis XVI," in *Inventing the French Revolution: Essays on French Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 109–53; Rachel Hammersley, "Concepts of Citizenship in France during the Long Eighteenth Century," *European Review of History* 22, no. 3 (May 2015): 468–85; Joan McDonald, *Rousseau and the French Revolution 1762-1791* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013), 79–93. For more on Tone's anti-sectarian message, see first: Tone, "An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland," 26–31. For further references to his views on unity between the different denominations in Ireland, also see: Cronin and Roche, *Freedom the Wolfe Tone Way*, 14–19; MacDermot, *Theobald Wolfe Tone and His Times*, 182; Greaves, *Theobald Wolfe Tone and the Irish Nation*, 45–60.

³⁴⁶ Tone, "Proposal Submitted to William Pitt for the Establishment of a Military Colony in the Sandwich Islands."

plans for a military colony in the islands as a way of countering Spain's dominance in the area. The renewed proposal emulated the original but outlined more fully how the islands' strategic placing would counter Spain's monopoly, rather than simply discussing the colonising of the land, as was outlined in the first draft.³⁴⁷ These plans were drafted in conjunction with Tone's younger brother, William, and Benjamin Phipps, with whom he had become acquainted at Trinity College.

Taken together, the two versions of the memorandum demonstrate two key points: how Tone believed a republic ought to be upheld and directed by its citizens, and his assessment of the characteristics its people should have. They should embrace and embody virtue and duty to the state, rather than the ill-discipline of the natives Tone would go on to describe. Naturally then, what was crucial was the allegiance of these new citizens to the republic, rather than whether they could be tied to the location via historic, linguistic, or ethnic characteristics. This represented, first and foremost, a typically ancient republican view of citizen-state relations, and rather than the Herderian view of what type of people made up a 'nation'. It was essential only that its citizens were virtuous, contrary to the "savage" people he depicts currently occupying the land.³⁴⁸

The fact that he wrote the Sandwich Islands memorandum for Pitt in 1788 was likely a product of his political ambitions rather than the sincerity of his aspirations to bring the colony to fruition. He appears to have been first inspired by his reading of Woodes Rogers' *A Cruising Voyage Around the World* (1712) while in London.³⁴⁹ Rogers' work tells the story of one of Britain's most successful privateers, who aimed to restrict Spain's monopoly of trade in the Pacific by harassing the country's ships. Whereas *A Cruising Voyage* saw nations in more conventional terms, relating to factors like ethnicity, for Tone, the colony would be shaped by its military and commercial activity. That was despite the fact that the latter, in particular, was typically thought to be incompatible with republican virtue. It is striking that the people of the colony Tone envisaged would not be distinguished by ethnicity, as they would be implanted. In this way, he was not unique in suggesting that nations could be shaped by factors such as commercial activity. Numerous Scottish thinkers, particularly Adam Smith, William Robertson, and John Millar, had attempted to explain the progress of civilisation

³⁴⁷ Tone, "Renewed Proposal for the Establishment of a Military Colony in the Sandwich Islands".

³⁴⁸ Tone, "Proposal Submitted to William Pitt for the Establishment of a Military Colony in the Sandwich Islands." f. 258

³⁴⁹ Woodes Rogers, *A Cruising Voyage Around the World: First to the South-Seas, Thence to the East-Indies, and Homewards by the Cape of Good Hope*, 2004th ed. (London: Narrative Press, 1712). Elliott provides a discussion of Tone's interest in Cook's voyages, and his reading of related texts, in: Elliott, *Wolfe Tone*, 55–57. It is likely that Tone chose to write specifically about the Sandwich Islands after reading Captain Cook's account of his discoveries, which he mentions in the first line of his initial proposal. James Cook and James King, *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean...Performed under the Direction of Captains Cook, Clarke and Gore in His Majesty's Ships Resolution and Discovery in the Years 1770-80*, vol. 3 (London: Champante and Whitrow, 1784).

through ‘four-stages theory’.³⁵⁰ Though stadial theory was not as prominent in Ireland as it was in Scotland, there are parallels with Tone’s ideas that civilisation brought wealth and commerce and allowed states to develop.³⁵¹ This may explain why Tone was advocating trade and empire when it contradicted his wider republican aspirations – seeing as wealth brought corruption - though it is possible he was attempting to make the colony more appealing to Pitt. He was ultimately seeking a self-sufficient, self-reliant colony.

The islands’ prospective new citizens would not be defined by ethnicity, therefore, but by common virtues, such as bravery and spirit. Tone immediately makes it clear in his attached follow-up letter to Pitt in 1788 that he is aiming to replicate a Roman model, as “I know not that the experiment of a Military Colony has been tried since the days of Ancient Rome.”³⁵² Rome’s colonies were small settlements consisting of a few hundred citizens.³⁵³ Hence, Tone planned for “500 men under the age of 30 be selected from the different Marching Regiments (and ten times that number would voluntarily embark in such a plan)”. Like in ancient Rome, not only would these citizens defend the territory, the colony would provide further opportunities for landless freemen. Furthermore, Tone planned to adopt the Roman system of compensating volunteers with land, thus giving them a stake in society so as to increase the incentives for military protection of the settlement.³⁵⁴ He elaborated:

My idea is to construct the settlement on somewhat of a Feudal plan, to reward military exertions by donations of Land...to train the rising generation to Arms and adventure; to create a small but impenetrable Nation of Soldiers, an Army of sinew and bone, where every Man should have a property, and spirit and skill and arms to defend it.

³⁵⁰ Christopher Berry, *The Idea of Commercial Society in the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015); Knud Haakonssen, *Adam Smith* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 1998). Kimihiro Koyanagi, “Civilization and History in Lord Kames and William Robertson,” in *The Rise of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. Tatsuya Sakamoto and Hideo Tanaka (London: Routledge, 2005), 150–63. Ronald Lindley Meek, “Smith, Turgot and the ‘Four Stages’ Theory,” in *Smith, Marx, and After: Ten Essays in the Development of Economic Thought* (Basingstoke: Springer, 1977), 18–32.

³⁵¹ Colin Kidd, “Gaelic Antiquity and National Identity in Enlightenment Ireland and Scotland,” *The English Historical Review* 109, no. 434 (November 1, 1994): 1197–1214.

³⁵² Tone, “Proposal Submitted to William Pitt for the Establishment of a Military Colony in the Sandwich Islands,” f. 258

³⁵³ Benjamin W. Millis, “The Social and Ethnic Origins of the Colonists in Early Roman Corinth,” in *Corinth in Context: Comparative Studies on Religion and Society*, ed. Steven J. Friesen, Daniel N. Schowalter, and James C. Walters (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 13–37; Brian Campbell, *Rivers and the Power of Ancient Rome* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 168.

³⁵⁴ Kate Gilliver, “The Augustan Reform and the Structure of the Imperial Army,” in *A Companion to the Roman Army*, ed. Paul Erdkamp (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2011), 183–201.

This was but one example of his plans to reward soldiers with land, further adding in the memorandum that “officers be given immediately Land in a certain proportion to the rank of each”.³⁵⁵ Herein lies one of the most concrete examples of Tone’s classical republicanism. The real purpose of the colony would be a military one, though for the benefit of Pitt, Tone also explains how the strategic placing of the Sandwich Islands would be beneficial to Britain’s fur trade in North America and could also exploit Spain’s commercial weakness in South and Central America. Elliott has commented on the “continuing mesmerisation with the military vigour of ancient Rome”, shown in these writings.³⁵⁶ Tone includes a request for “at least 2500 stand of spare arms” and quickly contrasts his ideal republican citizen – of “sinew and bone”, “spirit and skill”, owning property – to the “cowardice” and “ill-discipline” of the natives.³⁵⁷ His interpretation is closer to that of Thomas Hobbes, who describes the state of nature full of “poor, nasty, brutish” men, as opposed to Rousseau’s “noble savage” who remained uncorrupted by civilisation.³⁵⁸ Tellingly, Tone concludes by appealing to the “Wisdom and Virtue and Decision in the Government” – that is, Pitt’s government – to bring about this model society.³⁵⁹ In this way, these memoranda had closely followed a republican literary tradition concerning political utopias, which had been revived by the English social philosopher Thomas More in the sixteenth century.³⁶⁰ Tone had an array of works from which he could draw inspiration, including those of Swift. While not a republican himself, Swift had crafted the character of a model citizen with his ‘houyhnhnms’ in *Gulliver’s Travels*, creatures who enjoyed a utopian existence without jealousy or violence.³⁶¹

While Tone later described his plans for the Sandwich Islands as “folly”, it appears the ideas behind them stayed with him into his later years. Indeed, while discussing a life of continued exile with his

³⁵⁵ Tone, “Proposal Submitted to William Pitt for the Establishment of a Military Colony in the Sandwich Islands.” f. 257

³⁵⁶ Elliott, *Wolfe Tone*, 56.

³⁵⁷ Tone, “Proposal Submitted to William Pitt for the Establishment of a Military Colony in the Sandwich Islands.” f. 256

³⁵⁸ Hobbes, *Leviathan: With Selected Variants from the Latin Edition of 1668*, 76; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin and the Foundations of Inequality Among Men* (1754) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). Rousseau’s interpretation of man in the state of nature is, naturally, more complex than simply a glorification of the ‘savage’, but he does see some merits in primitivism, albeit accepting that returning to such a state would not be feasible in the context of modern civilisation. The myth of Rousseau’s extolling of the ‘noble savage’ was first debunked in: Arthur O. Lovejoy, “The Supposed Primitivism of Rousseau’s ‘Discourse on Inequality,’” *Modern Philology* 21, no. 2 (November 1923): 165–86.

³⁵⁹ Tone, “Proposal Submitted to William Pitt for the Establishment of a Military Colony in the Sandwich Islands,” 257.

³⁶⁰ More, *More: Utopia* (1516); Harrington, *Harrington: “The Commonwealth of Oceana” and “A System of Politics.”*

³⁶¹ Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726) (London: Penguin, 1967); Eugene R. Hammond, “Nature-Reason-Justice in Utopia and Gulliver’s Travels,” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 22, no. 3 (Summer 1982): 445–68; Katarzyna Bartoszyńska, “Persuasive Ironies: Utopian Readings of Swift and Krasicki,” *Comparative Literature Studies* 50, no. 4 (December 1, 2013): 618–42; Bernard Harrison, “Houyhnhnm Virtue,” *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas* 1, no. 1 (2003): 35–64.

wife Matilda in 1797, he remarks of the islands discovered by Cook in the South Sea: “If one could get there, without umbrage to Spain, and with the consent of England guaranteed to us by France, we might lay the foundation of a republic which, tho’ it would neither be great, rich nor powerful, might be very happy”.³⁶² Given Tone’s priorities for the moral development of citizens over commercial success, it is easy to see the appeal of an island colony, especially with reference to Montesquieu’s idea that republicanism was best applied to smaller states, which did not seek to become prominent economic powers.³⁶³ This was true, too, in Ireland’s case. Tone adds, having listed numerous possible destinations: “I confess this last plan is my favorite”.³⁶⁴ Indeed, despite his attempts to distance himself from his initial memoranda, these later statements echo classical republican thought even more closely, as by this stage, he evidently believed that the developing a nation of happy, virtuous citizens was more important than commercial prosperity.

It has been demonstrated how the Sandwich Islands memoranda gave an early indication of Tone’s ancient republican views on citizens’ allegiance to the state being based on duty and virtue. This would become crucial to his wider political message, as it allowed all denominations and ethnicities to be included in his interpretation of the ‘nation’. The idea that morality was more important than ethnicity is further demonstrated in his essays of 1790, notably *On the State of Ireland in 1720*, which develops a scathing attack on “luxury”.³⁶⁵ Complaining of disproportionate English influence in law, religion, property, and government, Tone attacks the landed Protestant elite in Ireland as “not only aliens, but absentees...actively employed against that country on whose vitals and in whose blood they were rioting in ease and luxury”.³⁶⁶ In the eighteenth-century debate on luxury, the vice was seen to encourage immorality, sloth, and most seriously, political corruption.³⁶⁷ It was a typical view in eighteenth-century republicanism, Montesquieu and Fénelon leading these arguments in France, for example.³⁶⁸ Rousseau’s *Emile* argued that luxury and enjoyment did not even necessarily go hand-in-hand.³⁶⁹ Tone blamed the luxury of the rich, which in Ireland’s case meant absentee landlords and

³⁶² Wolfe Tone, “Letter to Matilda Tone,” August 31, 1797, Tone (Dickason) papers, Trinity College Dublin.

³⁶³ Charles de Secondat Baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu, *Montesquieu’s Science of Politics: Essays on the Spirit of Laws*, ed. David W. Carrithers, Michael A. Mosher, and Paul A. Rahe (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 127–28.

³⁶⁴ Tone, “Letter to Matilda Tone,” August 31, 1797

³⁶⁵ Tone, “On the State of Ireland in 1720,” f. 12.

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

³⁶⁷ Martyn J Powell, “The Politics of Luxury,” in *The Politics of Consumption in Eighteenth-Century Ireland* (Basingstoke: Springer, 2005), 43–75.

³⁶⁸ François Fénelon, *Telemachus, Son of Ulysses (1699)*, ed. Patrick Riley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Montesquieu, *Montesquieu: The Spirit of the Laws*.

³⁶⁹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile, Or, On Education (1762)*, ed. Christopher Kelly and Allan Bloom (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 2010); While this was the archetypal republican view on luxury, other political voices argued luxury could be a positive thing and was simply a by-product of wealth and security. See, for example: Jean-François Melon, *Essai Politique Sur Le Commerce (1734)* (Caen: Presses Universitaires de Caen, 2014). Jeremy Jennings, “The Debate About Luxury in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century French Political Thought,” *The Journal of the History of Ideas* 68 (2007): 79–105; Ellen Ross,

government ministers, for the plight of the poor. Addressing accusations against the “lower ranks” of “pride, laziness and dishonesty” he cited “misrule and ignorance and oppression”, designed “to keep any nation in ignorance and poverty.”³⁷⁰

Tone needed to demonstrate that this “ignorance and poverty” was not the fault of the people themselves but was due to British legislation. Thus, the national character of Irish citizens should not be criticised. Specifically, he referenced the Declaratory Act of 1720, which had asserted the right of the Westminster parliament to legislate for Ireland and repudiated the appellate jurisdiction of the Irish House of Lords, hence Tone focusing on that period of time in his essay. He describes the year 1720 as “the time of her [Ireland’s] greatest abasement.”³⁷¹ By doing so, the historical links between Britain and Ireland are referenced in order to recall previous injustices. This was a call to history that had little in common with the romantic trend, which would become more common in the nineteenth century, of exploring the past by looking to a pre-Norman, Gaelic Ireland, prior to a time where the British invasion had altered its social and political spheres.³⁷² Tone therefore refused to accept the notion of “inherent depravity” and argued for Ireland to have independent government even if this was not based on romantic national ideas. Enlightened Scots may have believed that union with England represented modernity, commerce and prosperity, but Ireland was certainly not benefiting economically from the connection.³⁷³

Tone’s interpretation, that these factors could have an impact on the “ignorance and poverty” he mentions above of the Irish people, was distinctive not least because it was not necessarily mirrored by other United Irishmen. Indeed, some markers of romantic nationalist writing were conspicuous by their absence in Tone’s work, particularly as they were present in the political writings of other

“Mandeville, Melon and Voltaire: The Origins of the Luxury Controversy in France,” *SVEC* 155 (1976); John Sekora, *Luxury: The Concept in Western Thought, Eden to Smollet* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1977).

³⁷⁰ Tone, “On the State of Ireland in 1720.” f. 11

³⁷¹ Ibid. f. 8

³⁷² The accuracy of this popular historical narrative has been discussed by: FSL Lyons, “The Dilemma of the Irish Contemporary Historian,” *Hermathena* 105 (1973): 45–56; Ronan Fanning, “The ‘Great Enchantment’: Uses and Abuses of Modern Irish History,” in *Interpreting Irish History - The Debate on Historical Revisionism 1938-1994*, ed. C. Brady (Irish Academic Press, 1994.), 146–60; Kathleen Nutt, “Irish Identity and the Writing of History,” *Eire-Ireland* 24, no. 2 (1994): 160–72.

³⁷³ A number of Scottish thinkers commented on the economic benefits of union with Britain, which John Millar, for example, described as “highly beneficial to both nations”. David Hume, meanwhile, noted how “trade and manufactures and agriculture have increased”. John Millar, *An Historical View of the English Government, from the Settlement of the Saxons in Britain to the Revolution in 1688 [1787]*, ed. Mark Phillips and Dale R. Smith (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2006), 4; David Hume, “Of the Protestant Succession,” in *The Philosophical Works of David Hume: Including All the Essays, and Exhibiting the More Important Alterations and Corrections in the Successive Editions Published by the Author*, vol. 3 (Edinburgh: Adam Black and William Tait, 1826), 555. For a summary on the political thought behind the union, also see: Fania Oz-Salzberger, “The Political Theory of the Scottish Enlightenment,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. Alexander Broadie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 157–78.

United Irishmen. For instance, Tone does not appear to have been particularly interested in the Irish language or culture, contrary to fellow members of the United Irishmen, especially Thomas Russell, who placed much greater significance on cultural aspects of Irish identity. Russell was a strong advocate of the Irish language, which his co-founder was not. Whereas Russell even wrote a preface to an Irish dictionary, there is little evidence that Tone, by contrast, wanted to revive the language.³⁷⁴

It was perfectly plausible for Tone to articulate his arguments on Irish legislative independence without holding strong romantic nationalist views on the advancement of the Irish language. Tone did not articulate his views on language either way, not so much an opposition, as a lack of any real stance at all. Meanwhile, his relationship with Gaelic culture has been at the centre of a debate among historians. Elliott notes that he was dismissive of “things Gaelic.”³⁷⁵ On the other hand, Mary Helen Thuente has argued that he was familiar with traditional Irish music and played the flute, even if he was uninterested in Gaelic history.³⁷⁶ Even if a consensus has yet to be reached on the matter, Tone’s level of familiarity with Gaelic culture was not necessarily indicative of his political views. Yet the fact that he was not entirely ignorant of Gaelic Irish culture suggests that it was a conscious decision to favour republican characteristics over cultural ones in his writing.

Another common way in which a romantic sense of national identity was expressed was through landscape, as epitomised by William Drennan.³⁷⁷ A poet, physician and a relatively radical member of the United Irishmen, Drennan was widely credited with initiating the phrase “emerald isle” in his 1795 poem *When Erin First Rose*.³⁷⁸ The verse implores that “where Britain made brutes now let Erin make men” – an intriguing association of Britain with “brutes”, as this contradicted how the British perceived their own national character: the ‘respectable’ or ‘civilised’ in contrast with the ‘savages’ to be found in their colonies.³⁷⁹ Drennan’s phrasing, “Let Erin make men” is a further indication that

³⁷⁴ Thomas Russell, “Thomas Russell Correspondence and Papers 1792-1802,” MS 868/1/37, Trinity College Dublin.

³⁷⁵ Elliott, *Wolfe Tone*, 401.

³⁷⁶ Mary Helen Thuente, *The Harp Re-Strung: The United Irishmen and the Rise of Irish Literary Nationalism* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1994), 7.

³⁷⁷ Drennan had initially worked with Patriot leader Henry Grattan for reform. He describes his early political life in: William Drennan, *William Drennan - Selected Writings: United Irish Years, 1791-1798 - With Drennan's "Letter to Earl Fitzwilliam" (1795)* (Belfast: Belfast Historical & Educational Society, 1998). Also see: H. Logan, “Dr. William Drennan - His Life in Georgian Ireland,” *The Ulster Medical Journal* 52, no. 2 (1983): 170–77. Stephen Small, “From Radical Reform to Republican Separatism, 1793-1798,” in *Political Thought in Ireland 1776-1798: Republicanism, Patriotism, and Radicalism*.

³⁷⁸ William Drennan, *Fugitive Pieces, in Verse and Prose* (Belfast: F.D. Finlay, 1815), 1.

³⁷⁹ On these perceptions in English identity, see: Christopher Flynn, *Americans in British Literature, 1770-1832: A Breed Apart* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2013); Jack P. Greene, “‘A Fruitless, Bloody, Wasting War’ - The Languages of Imperial Grandeur, Liberty, Humanity, and Commerce in the American Conflict,” in *Evaluating Empire and Confronting Colonialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 200–296; Troy Bickham, *Savages Within the Empire: Representations of American Indians in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005).

these hopes for gallant, physically strong citizens were key to the United Irish programme, just as citizen virtue was directly linked to masculinity in the Roman republican tradition, the term ‘virtue’ linked etymologically to the Latin ‘vir’, ‘man’.³⁸⁰ Indeed, Drennan himself was prominent in the Volunteer movement of the 1780s who had put pressure on Westminster to concede Irish legislative independence, as these militias were helping to maintain law and order while Britain was focused on the American colonies. As for Tone, he talked about Ireland’s landscape only rarely. In his 1791 *Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland*, he does describe a nation “inferior to no country in Europe in the gifts of nature, blest with a temperate sky and a fruitful soil, intersected by many great rivers, indented round her whole coast with the noblest harbours”, only to immediately return to praising its “4,000,000 of an ingenious and a gallant people, with bold hearts, and ardent spirit”.³⁸¹

From Tone’s memoranda and essays, it has been established that his understanding of citizenship was inspired by ancient republics, with civic virtue, duty, and military strength making up the most important elements of these societies. His engagement with common eighteenth-century ideas of patriotism and republicanism could easily be mistaken by a modern reader as proto-romanticism, but it was actually built upon very different intellectual foundations. While there is some limited evidence that he was inspired by the Irish landscape and Gaelic culture, these concepts are more precisely linked to other members of the United Irishmen, notably Russell and Drennan. As he sought to tie all Irish citizens to the state, Tone could not rely on cultural or ethnic links, but rather on republican notions of allegiance to depict an Irish civic nation.

The Catholic question (1791-93)

Tone’s early writings have demonstrated that the primary way in which he imagined Irish citizenship was through republican characteristics. His views on the links between citizenship and religion will now be addressed by considering his 1791 pamphlet, *An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland*, as well as some of his shorter writings, such as his January 1792 reply to a text entitled *A Brief Caution to the Roman Catholics of Ireland*.³⁸² Once his understanding of Catholic identity has been explored, his efforts to counter sectarianism will also be discussed in the context of agrarian violence between the Peep o’Day Boys and Defenders in the north, as detailed in his journal entry under the pseudonym John Hutton.³⁸³

³⁸⁰ Myles McDonnell, *Roman Manliness: “Virtus” and the Roman Republic*, 2006, 165–73.

³⁸¹ Tone, “An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland,” 7.

³⁸² Tone, “An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland,”; Tone, “A Short Answer to a ‘Brief Caution to the Roman Catholics of Ireland’ [By a Liberty Boy] - 1792.”

³⁸³ Tone, “Journal of the Proceedings of John Hutton Esq on His Third Journey to the North of Ireland, Including His Artful Negotiations with the Peep o’day Boys and Sundry Peers of the Realm - Also His Valorous Entry into and Famous Retreat out of the City of Rathfriland [1792],” 161–91.

The place of Catholics in both the political system and indeed in wider society – in law, education, and the economy – was a question at the heart of Irish radicalism by the 1790s.³⁸⁴ The Irish political scene became fixated on the Catholic question, in a similar way to how dissenters in England enjoyed a notable presence in political discourse as they sought increased rights for different denominations.³⁸⁵ This is certainly one area in which Tone's political direction followed mainstream trends.³⁸⁶ As alluded to in the previous chapter, Tone could look to examples of prominent political figures like Burke, who had campaigned for Catholic rights in order to bring social stability and because he believed such equality was more in tune with natural order. What separated Tone from previous thinkers – and especially from those sympathetic Anglo-Irish campaigners, such as Burke – was his increasing emphasis on how Catholic and Protestant communities could unite to oppose British legislation. Perhaps this was inevitable given a broader shift in attitude towards Catholics over the course of the eighteenth century. It nonetheless represented a break away from some influential Patriot writers, notably Charles Lucas (1713-1771), who has consistently been accused of espousing anti-Catholic bigotry, in an era when Patriot sentiment had little to do with Catholic interests, before the campaign to repeal the penal laws had taken off.³⁸⁷

As Smyth has put it, Catholics were not fully part of the political nation because “membership ... depended upon conformity to the Anglican communion; Catholics, and to a lesser degree, dissenters, were excluded”.³⁸⁸ In this way, Tone adopted a relatively unusual argument for his era by linking democracy with national sentiment, presenting all citizens as part of a wider ‘Irish’ cause, regardless of elements that might otherwise exclude them. Some of the earliest evidence for Tone's anti-sectarian message comes in his 1790 essay ‘*On the Necessity of Domestic Union*’.³⁸⁹ The reasons

³⁸⁴ This should not be confused with later Catholic Emancipation efforts of the nineteenth century. Indeed, it was not until decades after the United Irishmen that the idea of a ‘Catholic Irish’ nation began to be consolidated: Thomas Bartlett, “The Emergence of the Irish Catholic Nation, 1750–1850,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Irish History*, ed. Alvin Jackson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 517–645.

³⁸⁵ For further detail of the role of English dissenters in the shaping of radicalism in Britain, see: James E. Bradley, *Religion, Revolution and English Radicalism: Non-Conformity in Eighteenth-Century Politics and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Simon Maccoby, *English Radicalism: 1786-1832* (London and New York: Psychology Press, 2001); Nicholas McDowell, *The English Radical Imagination: Culture, Religion, and Revolution, 1630-1660* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003); Anthony Lincoln, *Some Political and Social Ideas of English Dissent 1763-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

³⁸⁶ Maureen Wall, “The Rise of a Catholic Middle Class in Eighteenth-Century Ireland,” *Irish Historical Studies* 11, no. 42 (September 1958): 91–115; Seán Murphy, “Charles Lucas, Catholicism and Nationalism,” *Eighteenth-Century Ireland* 8 (January 1993): 83–102; Brian MacDermot, *The Catholic Question in Ireland and England, 1798-1822: The Papers of Denys Scully* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1988); Nicholas Lee, *The Catholic Question in Ireland, 1762-1829*, vol. 6 (Bristol: Thoemmes, 2000); Thomas Bartlett, *The Fall and Rise of the Irish Nation: The Catholic Question 1690-1830* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1992).

³⁸⁷ Lucas' role in the development of Irish nationalism, and according questions of his anti-Catholicism, are reassessed in: Murphy, “Charles Lucas, Catholicism and Nationalism.” Lucas is now more widely accepted as being part of a civic republican tradition, which played an important part in shaping the direction of evolving ideas about the Irish nation.

³⁸⁸ Smyth, *The Men of No Property: Irish Radicals and Popular Politics in the Late Eighteenth Century*, 11.

³⁸⁹ Tone, “On the Necessity of Domestic Union”.

behind Tone's religious tolerance were twofold: a united Irish people consisting of "Catholics, Protestants and Presbyterians" would therefore be "greater than any one of these sects and equal to them together".³⁹⁰ A unified population was also an "indispensable requisite to secure and extend the trade we have so lately extorted", a similar argument to those of the radical preacher Richard Price in Britain, who implored people to "remove local prejudices" via foreign trade.³⁹¹ The crux of this particular Tone essay is that "union is better than discord", primarily because the British Government took its power from the "disunion of Irishmen".³⁹² As a consequence of such division, the Irish House of Commons was not being held accountable for putting forward £200,000 towards resolving the Nootka Sound crisis with Spain, an expense which had been supposedly justified "'because the interests of both countries [Britain and Ireland] were the same'".³⁹³ Tone believed internal societal divisions had allowed the British and Irish Parliaments a free rein because they were met with insufficient opposition, just as was explored in Chapter One in the context of his anti-corruption piece *A Review of the Conduct of the Administration*.³⁹⁴ As he put it, "instead of watching the insidious arts of our Government here, we are watching each other".³⁹⁵

As part of these broader sectarian tensions, the period between 1791-3 has been characterised as one of Catholic agitation. It is in this context that Tone's pamphlet, *An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland*, was published in 1791.³⁹⁶ There remained a number of grievances amongst the Catholic population, in spite of the Catholic Relief Acts from 1771 onwards. Tone's *Argument* was an attempt to convince Ireland's dominant Protestant class that allowing Catholics to sit in Parliament again would not lead to a complete takeover or overhaul of that Parliament, as was feared in some quarters. Indeed, as a possible by-product of his association with the Catholic Committee, he argued that allowing Catholics to be represented in the Irish House of Commons would unite the different sects into one 'Irish' political movement. He argued:

If all barriers between the two religions were beaten down, so far as civil matters are concerned ... what interest could a Catholic member of Parliament have, distinct from his Protestant brother sitting on the same bench, exercising the same function, bound by the same ties?³⁹⁷

³⁹⁰ Ibid. f. 23

³⁹¹ Richard Price, *Price: Political Writings*, ed. D.O. Thomas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 146.

³⁹² Tone, "On the Necessity of Domestic Union." f. 26

³⁹³ Ibid.

³⁹⁴ Tone, "A Review of the Conduct of Administration during the Seventh Session of Parliament- Addressed to the Constitutional Electors and Free People of Ireland, on the Approaching Dissolution."

³⁹⁵ Tone, "On the Necessity of Domestic Union" f. 26

³⁹⁶ Tone, "An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland".

³⁹⁷ Ibid. 26.

Tone identified himself as “a Protestant of the Church of Ireland” who was “no further interested in the event, than as a mere lover of justice and a steady detester of tyranny, whether exercised by one man or one million.”³⁹⁸ He was confident that Protestant fears – specifically, that Catholic representation would ultimately lead to a majority of Catholic MPs – could be allayed, something he based on “historical experience”. He looked back to a time before the 1652 Act of Settlement which had banned Catholics from membership of parliament. Once again, he engaged with Ireland’s history, not by evoking proto-romantic notions of a shared past and culture, but by looking to previous systems of Irish government. “When the House was open to both religions indifferently,” Tone reminisces in the hope of appealing to the Protestant ruling class, “no such majority existed, though in times when Catholicity flourished, and the Protestant interest was feeble, comparatively, to what we now see it”.³⁹⁹ Tone fails to provide details, however, on why Catholics did not enjoy a majority.

Since his pamphlet was chiefly concerned with Catholic representation in politics, Tone also addressed the question of disproportionate Protestant land ownership. For example, Daniel Gahan points out that in counties such as Wexford, landowners were almost entirely Protestant despite making up less than a fifth of the population in those areas.⁴⁰⁰ The situation was exacerbated by the penal laws and intrinsically linked to the lack of Catholic participation in the political sphere. Among other disadvantages, Catholics had to pay a debilitating double land tax. Land ownership and political power were intrinsically linked, one impossible without the other, hence Tone’s demands for representative reform which would at the very least allow Catholics with a proportion of land a voice. Tone was not, however, advocating a universal sense of citizenship, where *all* Catholics would be included. Instead, what he argued for was instantly recognisable as a classical republican system whereby only those who owned some land could play a role in shaping society, as demonstrated by his rather conventional suggestion, which eventually transpired, to “extend the elective franchise to such Catholics only as have a freehold of 10l by the year.”⁴⁰¹ The Catholic Relief Act of 1791, the year of his writing, would permit land ownership of Catholics with a rental value of 2l a year. As will be discussed further in the chapter on his time in America, property and land are running themes throughout Tone’s writings and he can generally be shown to be against the redistribution of land and in favour of private property. Indeed, his views would be sharpened by his time in Philadelphia, where he was exposed to Thomas Jefferson’s agrarian republicanism, a tradition in which land ownership was directly linked to citizenship.⁴⁰²

³⁹⁸ Tone, 7.

³⁹⁹ Tone, “An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland,” 26.

⁴⁰⁰ Gahan, “Class, Religion and Rebellion: Wexford in 1798,” 83.

⁴⁰¹ Tone, “An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland,” 26–27.

⁴⁰² Ari Helo, *Thomas Jefferson’s Ethics and the Politics of Human Progress: The Morality of a Slaveholder* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 36–37; Dustin Gish and Daniel Klinghard, “The Composition History of Jefferson’s ‘Notes,’” in *Thomas Jefferson and the Science of Republican Government: A Political*

Catholic relief in the area of land ownership actually brought less comprehensive change than in Britain, where an Act was introduced in the same year, so Tone's arguments were inspired specifically by the Irish context. He sensed an opportunity to exploit the rise of Catholics in this area, as well as in other economic circles, to encourage Catholics to agitate for political representation. By limiting Catholic representation to those with a freehold of 10l, he was not only agreeing with the Roman style system, which was already in place, but appeasing fears that Protestant power would be diminished. Protestants would not lose influence, Tone suggested, due to the "great disproportion of property" and "weight and influence of Government" that they already possessed.⁴⁰³

Anti-Catholicism remained a significant issue in British and Irish society, even if in Britain at least, Protestant opinion was beginning to focus more intently on anti-Jacobinism, in line with the perceived threat of the French Revolution. Indeed, Catholic relief was to some extent being driven from above, the British government realising the need to recruit from Ireland and Scotland during the American revolutionary wars.⁴⁰⁴ In Ireland, at the same time as radicals were preoccupied with Catholic relief, a counter-movement formed.⁴⁰⁵ Even aside from the strength of anti-Catholic sentiment, a popular attitude persisted in elite circles that the masses – in the case of Ireland, Catholics – could not be trusted with the vote. A common argument in defence of Catholics' continued exclusion from the Parliament was their lack of education, which Tone lamented as another by-product of the penal laws. "It will be said, that the Catholics are ignorant, and therefore incapable of liberty," he writes.⁴⁰⁶ "We plunge them by law, and continue them by statute, in gross ignorance, and then we make the incapacity we have created, an argument for their exclusion, from the common rights of man!" Here, Tone equates "liberty" and the "rights of man" with inclusion in the political nation and the right to play a role in directing society, rather than understanding liberty as something that men possessed naturally.⁴⁰⁷ It is possible that his language in this passage reveals him taking inspiration from the

Biography of Notes on the State of Virginia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 27–73; Lisi Krall, "Thomas Jefferson's Agrarian Vision and the Changing Nature of Property," *Journal of Economic Issues* 36, no. 1 (March 2002): 131–50; A. Whitney Griswold, "The Agrarian Democracy of Thomas Jefferson," *The American Political Science Review* 40, no. 4 (August 1946): 657–81.

⁴⁰³ Tone, "An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland," 26–27.

⁴⁰⁴ John Stuart Shaw, *The Political History of Eighteenth-Century Scotland* (Basingstoke: Macmillan International Higher Education, 1999), 122.

⁴⁰⁵ Jim Smyth, "Anti-Catholicism, Conservatism, and Conspiracy: Sir Richard Musgrave's Memoirs of the Different Rebellions in Ireland," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 22, no. 3 (1998): 63–64.

⁴⁰⁶ Tone, "An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland," 20.

⁴⁰⁷ Phillip Pettit, "Before Negative and Positive Liberty," in *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 17–51; Quentin Skinner, "The Idea of Negative Liberty: Philosophical and Historical Perspectives," in *Philosophy and History: Essays in the Historiography of Philosophy*, ed. Richard Rorty, Jerome B. Schneewind, and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 193–221; Quentin Skinner, "The Republican Ideal of Political Liberty," in *Machiavelli and Republicanism*, ed. Gisela Bock, Quentin Skinner, and Maurizio Viroli (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 293–309; David Wootton, *Republicanism, Liberty, and Commercial Society, 1649-1776* (Stanford:

Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, though there are a number of possible influences behind this phrasing, including Paine's text of the same name.⁴⁰⁸

Tone's claims that the government had no legitimacy without Catholic representation, as Catholics were such a significant portion of 'the people' does echo the *Declaration of the Rights of Man*. Article XVI stated that "any society in which the guarantee of rights is not assured, nor the separation of powers determined, has no constitution".⁴⁰⁹ Tone chose similar wording in his *Argument*, speaking specifically about "the rights of citizens". This is one of the few occasions when he strays from more traditional republican ideals, namely that only those with a stake in society should be able to play a part in democracy, instead basing his motivations for expanding the franchise on a moral, French revolutionary perspective of universal rights.⁴¹⁰ This had been most famously expounded in Abbé Sieyès's argument that 'the people' was the legitimate source of sovereignty and should not necessarily be carved up into three different 'estates'. Yet, in the very same pamphlet, Tone did return to a more traditionally republican vision when he advocated distinguishing those entitled to vote by property qualifications.⁴¹¹ His interpretation may therefore be viewed as more similar to Locke's. Where Locke had argued that men's characteristics were not entirely natural and men were instead "moulded or fashioned as one pleases", Tone, likewise, asks of Irish Catholics: "What has made them ignorant?" – "not the hand of Nature: For I presume they are born with capacities, pretty much like other men".⁴¹²

In shaping his *Argument*, Tone looked to other societies for examples of Catholic political representation. Following these examples would help Ireland to move on from being "obscure and wretched, and unknown in Europe".⁴¹³ In America, he notes that "Catholic and Protestant sit equally in Congress" with no detriment to the political process. France too, saw a case where a Protestant had been deputed to the National Assembly by 200,000 Catholics, "with orders to procure what has since been accomplished, an abolition of all civil distinctions, which were founded merely on religious

Stanford University Press, 1994). David van Mill, *Liberty, Rationality, and Agency in Hobbes's Leviathan* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001).

⁴⁰⁸ National Assembly of France, "Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen," August 26, 1789, <http://www.hrcr.org/docs/frenchdec.html>. Paine, *The Rights of Man: Being an Answer to Mr Burke's Attack on the French Revolution*.

⁴⁰⁹ National Assembly of France, "Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen."

⁴¹⁰ Tone, "An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland," 1791, 19, 28.

⁴¹¹ Abbé Sieyès, "What Is the Third Estate? (1789)," in *Sieyès: Political Writings: Including the Debate Between Sieyès and Tom Paine in 1791*, ed. Michael Sonenscher (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2003), 92–163.

⁴¹² John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693) (London: A. and J. Churchill, 1712), 322; Tone, *An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland*, 20.

⁴¹³ Tone, "An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland," 31.

opinions”.⁴¹⁴ Thus, it becomes clear that Tone differentiates religious ties from political ones, contrary to the accusation that Catholics would always be more loyal to the Pope than the Crown. In the same way, he supposes that “if we are still illiberal and blind bigots, who deny that civil liberty can exist out of the pale of Protestantism”, it would be to “withhold the sacred cup of *Liberty* from our Catholic Brother and repel him from the communion of our natural rights”.⁴¹⁵ These “natural rights” and “civil liberties” which he speaks about concerned strictly political matters, not religious rights, given the climate in which he was writing. In post-Reformation Britain, and particularly during the course of the French Revolution, the move away from Catholicism was associated with increased ideological freedom and reason, which for those Irish Patriots who wanted to extend the franchise to Catholics posed a problem. They needed to allay fears that Catholic dogma was incompatible with intellectual progress; this was a largely irrelevant criticism since they were arguing on behalf of Catholics as a social group rather than the institution of the Catholic Church.⁴¹⁶

Tone’s principle argument for increased political rights for Catholics was based on his understanding of social contract theory, seeing them as one strand of ‘the people’ rather than placing emphasis on them as a religious group. In a similar manner to the French “civic nationalism” that emerged from the Revolution, Tone hoped that allegiance to the state could unify the different denominations within Ireland.⁴¹⁷ Tone believed the Dublin parliament needed to better reflect the wishes of the Irish people, given that the current situation meant “exclusion of three-fourths of the nation [Catholics] from their rights as men”.⁴¹⁸ In an ideal republican society, if the people could play an active role in government, then they would serve as a safeguard against despotism. This could not be achieved while Ireland was “deriving her government from another country”, leading its citizens to work against it or in Tone’s words, to “counteract the influence of that government, should it ever be, as it indisputably has been, exerted, to thwart her prosperity”.⁴¹⁹ Given Tone’s wider patterns of thought, ‘prosperity’ may be read not only in economic terms – though this was at the centre of Patriot grievances against Westminster – but also in a more traditional republican sense of a ‘good life’. Indeed, it is all the more likely he would have thought in these terms given that this had been the focus of high-profile debates in Britain too.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid. 31–32.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid. 31.

⁴¹⁶ John Spurr, “The English ‘Post-Reformation’?,” *The Journal of Modern History* 741, no. 1 (March 2002): 101–19; Michael Hunter and David Wootton, *Atheism from the Reformation to the Enlightenment* (Clarendon Press, 1992).

⁴¹⁷ On the different types of nationalisms that evolved after the French Revolution, for examples the distinction between ethnic and civic nationalism, see: Chimene I. Keitner, *Paradoxes of Nationalism, The: The French Revolution and Its Meaning for Contemporary Nation Building* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2012), 121–34.

⁴¹⁸ Tone, “An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland,” 30.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid. 12.

Tone therefore saw Catholics primarily as citizens before taking into account their religious affiliations. His secular thinking is indeed remarkable for his time. Tone's own dislike of the Catholic Church was evident when he claimed later that Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821) ought to have taken the opportunity to kill the Pope when French armies drove him from Rome in February 1798, an event Tone deemed "unwise to let slip so favourable an opportunity to destroy forever the Papal tyranny."⁴²⁰ Indeed, given Tone's anti-sectarian reputation, his hatred of the Catholic Church as an institution has, on occasion, been remembered with some irony.⁴²¹ It is possible to contend, however, that his equation of the Church with "tyranny" is illuminative of his broader view that the Pope was competing for the allegiance of citizens. This was a common accusation against Catholics – that they could not be wholly devoted to a state if they were also loyal to an outside Church – and while he sought to defend them in his *Argument*, it appears he held the same suspicion against the institution of the Church. Ultimately, while he favoured the advancement of Catholics as a collective, he had little time for Catholicism, which was not an unusual opinion for an Irish Anglican to hold. It is noteworthy that he signs off his *Argument* pamphlet with: 'A Northern Whig', which may allude to his affinity with Ulster.⁴²² It also suggests that he was trying to elevate his arguments by associating himself with more progressive elements of the Whig party, who had similarly argued for Catholic rights and secondly, that he did not yet consider himself to have broken away from mainstream politics.

Tone's next writing addressing the Catholic question came in 1792, with his reply to a text entitled *A Brief Caution to the Roman Catholics of Ireland* – Moody, McDowell, and Woods point out that the reply by 'A Liberty Boy' is almost certainly by Tone, as it was included in William's *Life* edition and no evidence has been found to contradict those claims of his authorship.⁴²³ The original writing, signed off 'By a real Friend to the Rights of Mankind' had warned Catholics to beware of assistance from non-Catholics in campaigning for reform. It argued:

Do not place too great a reliance on people of other religious persuasions who offer their advice and assistance unasked... Consider whether they be not alike enemies to Protestants and Roman

⁴²⁰ Tone, "Statement of the Situation of Ireland, Found on Jackson's Arrest, April 1794," 464.

⁴²¹ Eamonn McCann, "What Wolfe Tone and the Ian Paisley of '69 Have in Common," *Belfast Telegraph*, December 7, 2006, <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/opinion/columnists/eamonn-mccann/what-wolfe-tone-and-the-ian-paisley-of-69-have-in-common-28116764.html>.

⁴²² Both MacDermot and afterwards, Boylan, have noted that this was a nod to his connections with the Northern Whig Club, Belfast, and his authorship was very soon acknowledged regardless. MacDermot, *Theobald Wolfe Tone and His Times*, 77; Boylan, *Wolfe Tone*, 18.

⁴²³ Tone, "A Short Answer to a 'Brief Caution to the Roman Catholics of Ireland' [By a Liberty Boy] - 1792."

Catholics whether they are not jealous of the relaxations already obtained and wish, by misleading you, to prevent your gaining any more.⁴²⁴

Tone responded to the text by referencing the progress that had been made, especially among Presbyterians in the north of Ireland, in moving on from sectarian divisions. Bolstered in number by immigration from Scotland in the seventeenth century, Presbyterianism had been growing in Ulster and by the early eighteenth century, Presbyterians made up much of the province's middle classes and outnumbered other dissenting groups.⁴²⁵ While Ireland's Protestant minority were predominantly Anglican, other dissenters, including Presbyterians, Baptists, and Methodists, faced restrictions but did not suffer the same levels of political and civil inequality as Ireland's Catholic population. As well as a religious identity, Presbyterians in Ulster occupied a position considered neither Irish (a stance which began to change in part thanks to the radicalism of the 1790s spearheaded by the United Irishmen) nor entirely British. Their links with Scotland was another factor in separating them from the dominant Anglican Church, a point of contention as Presbyterians in some cases sought to defend themselves against suspicions of disloyalty.

He suggests that these Presbyterians would not focus their "spirit" on opposing Catholic reform when their energies could be spent "against the common enemy, I mean the wicked, bribing, taxing *Administration* of this country".⁴²⁶ He describes those Catholics who had "cordially shaken hands with your Protestant countrymen" using republican motifs of "wise men" and "gallant patriots". At the core of Tone's reply was the patriotism, and benefits to the nation as a whole, that would result from overcoming sectarian tensions. Creating this sense of a unified Irish citizenship was key to bringing about fundamental change, hence the Administration's "fear you should unite with your Protestant brethren".⁴²⁷

Throughout the early years of Tone's career, his anti-sectarian message is easily identifiable. When it is considered how much time Tone spent in the north of Ireland, the heartland of bitter sectarian clashes between the Peep o'Day Boys and the Catholic Defenders, it is unsurprising that he was so interested in finding a solution to the tensions between these agrarian secret societies. There were several instances of groups of Peep o'Day Boys attempting to drive Catholics down to the Southern counties and indeed, their name was a reference to the time of day when they would conduct their

⁴²⁴ Moody, McDowell, and Woods, *The Writings of Theobald Wolfe Tone, 1763-98: Tone's Career in Ireland to June 1795*, I:162.

⁴²⁵ Ian McBride, *Scripture Politics: Ulster Presbyterians and Irish Radicalism in the Late Eighteenth Century* (Clarendon Press, 1998), 28-34.

⁴²⁶ Tone, *Life*, 375.

⁴²⁷ Tone, "A Short Answer to a 'Brief Caution to the Roman Catholics of Ireland' [By a Liberty Boy] - 1792," 373.

raids. The Catholic Defenders were initially set up in opposition to that group, and the two were involved in sporadic but notable unrest for a number of years, remembered best for the Battle of the Diamond in September 1795.⁴²⁸ Tone's efforts on behalf of the Defenders would eventually bear fruit, with many joining the United Irishmen's ranks in 1796 and focusing their efforts on independence, some former members of the Defenders even taking part in the 1798 rebellion.⁴²⁹ Indeed, this is a possible explanation for an increase in members of the United Irishmen in the north by the mid-to-late 1790s.⁴³⁰

Whereas much of the Protestant social and political elite sought to distance themselves from the Peep o'Day Boys, Tone met with them. His 'negotiations' with them were recorded in 1792.⁴³¹ A small party of the General Committee of the Catholics, which included Tone, travelled to the north to aid peace between the agrarian groups. The energies of this General Committee group, initially spent on drinking and dining, eventually turned to bringing an end to the violence, making apparently frivolous suggestions such as one, to a coalition of the Protestant Ascendancy, of wearing green cockades in July's Battle of the Boyne commemorations instead of orange.⁴³² Tone's hand in attempting to stop "feuds in Newry" was to "advise them all to peace and unanimity", presumably an over-simplification of the discussions.⁴³³ However, as the journal continues, he places himself increasingly on the side of the Catholic Defenders. He criticises light policing, denouncing the authorities for allowing the militia to sort out disputes themselves. While the authorities believed justice had been distributed even-handedly, citing that "six Protestants have been hanged for Peep-of-Day practices", Tone alleges that "this is a lie".⁴³⁴ Likewise, in his diary entry of July 13, 1792, prior to these negotiations, he derides the Country corps as being "no better than Peep of day boys".⁴³⁵

Notwithstanding his wider sympathies with Catholics, he responds to these events by describing Catholic clergymen as "bad friends to liberty" after detailing a priest who had warned his congregation not to join clubs such as the United Irishmen. This was, once again, in line with his opposition to the Catholic Church as an institution, which will be discussed later in the context of French attacks on the Vatican. In contrast to his experiences with these priests in the north, Tone also

⁴²⁸ Michael Mays, *Nation States: The Cultures of Irish Nationalism* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007), 130.

⁴²⁹ Dominic Bryan, *Orange Parades: The Politics of Ritual, Tradition and Control* (London: Pluto Press, 2009), 32–34.

⁴³⁰ "Number of United Irishmen by Counties 1796-7 (11 Counties Only; Each Month October 1796-May 1797).," n.d., MS/3806, Trinity College Dublin.

⁴³¹ Tone, "Journal of the Proceedings of John Hutton Esq on His Third Journey to the North of Ireland, Including His Artful Negotiations with the Peep o'day Boys and Sundry Peers of the Realm - Also His Valorous Entry into and Famous Retreat out of the City of Rathfriland [1792]," 161–91.

⁴³² *Ibid.* 170.

⁴³³ *Ibid.* 172.

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.* 174.

⁴³⁵ Wolfe Tone, "Diary Entry - 13 July 1792," July 13, 1792, MS 2042 ff. 4-7, Trinity College Dublin.

reported one of his party's meetings with 18 Dissenting clergymen in Ulster, "and had the pleasure to find them *all* well-disposed to Catholic liberty".⁴³⁶ His time spent in the north ultimately left him to conclude that it was Catholic persecution which had caused such division in Ireland, as "if the Catholics could see that they had equal protection with the Protestants, peace would be immediately restored".⁴³⁷ Religious toleration therefore having the potential to bring about unity.

Finally, in November 1792, he wrote another *Address to the Roman Catholics of Ireland*, which he suggested would be directed by "the language of reason", a phrase associated with Enlightenment philosophy.⁴³⁸ Yet he called on Irish Catholics to draw on their own virtue rather than mirroring the French model. "French gallantry will not do," he argued, in another suggestion he was beginning to turn away from the increasingly volatile direction of the French revolution, when "true gallantry dwells only in humane breasts, and is incompatible with cruelty, but modern Frenchmen are ferocious". He adds: "The Frenchman's gallantry is on his lips; the Irishman's is in his heart," in a rare acknowledgement of characteristics peculiar to particular nationalities as he interpreted them. In his diaries of 1796, he further built upon the idea that Irish Catholics were particularly well-suited to make good citizens. He referred to them as "the Irish, properly so-called", because they held no conflicting identities with Britain and in some of his strongest language to date, added that they were "trained from their infancy in an hereditary hatred and abhorrence to the English name".⁴³⁹

Tone ultimately wanted Catholics, as the largest single denomination by number, to play an active role in shaping society. He understood the Catholic question as primarily a political one. By looking at his writings concerning Catholic rights, it has been demonstrated that his anti-sectarian message was inspired by the Irish political backdrop, as he believed a collective 'Irish' people would serve as a more effective opposition to government policy. He was influenced too, by discussions of individual rights, from Locke right the way through to the French Revolution.

The suppression of radicalism (1793-5)

It has been established that Tone's early political development was shaped by the campaign for Catholic rights and the wider Irish political backdrop of the late 1780s and early 1790s. From 1793 onwards, his ideas would then harden amid a crackdown on radical activity in Britain and Ireland. The remainder of the chapter will explore how, once his views on citizen-state relations had been formed,

⁴³⁶ Tone, "Journal of the Proceedings of John Hutton Esq on His Third Journey to the North of Ireland, Including His Artful Negotiations with the Peep o'day Boys and Sundry Peers of the Realm - Also His Valorous Entry into and Famous Retreat out of the City of Rathfriland [1792]," 173.

⁴³⁷ Ibid. 174.

⁴³⁸ Tone, "An Address to the Roman Catholics of Ireland."

⁴³⁹ Tone, *Life*, 187.

this clampdown played a vital role in shaping the United Irish mission as it turned leading members like Tone increasingly towards his plans for the assistance of France, against whom Britain had declared war in 1793. It is well known that the repression shaped Tone's plans for French assistance in the 1798 rebellion, as he was the chief United Irish figure in organising French aid. But here it is argued that it also caused his move towards full republicanism as had been seen in the French Revolution from 1792 onwards. While it is acknowledged that Tone was starting to move away from reform by 1793, this has been attributed to other factors – especially the fact that he believed reform no longer enjoyed public support.⁴⁴⁰ In fact, it is rather the very personal consequences of British moves against internal 'Jacobinism' that can explain why the years between 1793-5 proved a key stage in Tone's political development.

The Irish Parliament had accepted legislation, as will be discussed in the following pages, that would allow for closer monitoring of supposedly dangerous radicals. There is considerable evidence that Tone was affected by the campaign against radicalism. A number of his friends and acquaintances were arrested. Following the paranoia whipped up by the 1794 Treason Trials – a series of high-profile trials predominantly in Britain against alleged radicals accused of sedition – Tone himself was monitored by security forces.⁴⁴¹ When Tone had been in London several years earlier, he had not attracted any such interest at all, because his ideas represented nothing more extraordinary than what was already being discussed in reformist Whig circles. However, later in 1795, his name was mentioned in a list of prominent republicans in the context of him travelling to France.⁴⁴² Moreover, records show that the United Irishmen as an organisation were being treated with suspicion long before there was sufficient evidence to pursue them properly, and they were eventually forced underground in 1794.⁴⁴³ The United Irishmen's pro-French activities evidently fed into pre-existing concerns about radicalism among the British establishment.

Two key pieces of legislation introduced across Britain and Ireland were the Gunpowder Act and the Convention Act. The first, its full title "An Act to prevent the importation of Arms, Gunpowder, and

⁴⁴⁰ Elliott, *Wolfe Tone*, 215.

⁴⁴¹ T.B. Howell, ed., *A Complete Collection of State Trials and Proceedings for High Treason and Other Crimes and Misdemeanors from the Earliest Period to the Year 1783*, vol. 33 (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1826); L. Steffen, *Defining a British State: Treason and National Identity, 1608-1820* (Springer, 2001); M. Davis, *Radicalism and Revolution in Britain 1775-1848: Essays in Honour of Malcolm I. Thomis* (Basingstoke: Springer, 1999); John Kirk, *Cultures of Radicalism in Britain and Ireland* (London: Routledge, 2015); Dinwiddie, *Radicalism and Reform in Britain 1780-1850*; Glenn Burgess and Matthew Festenstein, eds., *English Radicalism, 1550-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Maccoby, *English Radicalism: 1786-1832*.

⁴⁴² "Reports of Disturbances in Ireland," July 3, 1795, U840/0147/4, Kent History and Library Centre, Maidstone.

⁴⁴³ "Paper Setting out the Plans of the United Irishmen," 1790s, U840/0152/1, Kent History and Library Centre, Maidstone.

Ammunition, into this Kingdom, and the removing and keeping of Gunpowder, Arms, and Ammunition without License”, was accepted by the Irish Parliament as an initially temporary act, allowing vigorous searches. The Convention Act, meanwhile, sought to ban all unlawful assemblies and to stop petitions claiming to represent “the people” being brought to the king or parliament. This was chiefly a response to the successes of the Catholic Convention, the committee which had campaigned against the penal laws, and which had included both Tone and his fellow reformer John Keogh as secretary and chairman respectively.⁴⁴⁴ Lord Clare, chief architect of the Convention Act, feared the United Irishmen were to hold a convention at Athlone in 1793, hence the decision to ban all assemblies. Prior to the Act’s inception, it had been opposed by Grattan, who feared it would prevent legitimate opposition movements. The combination of the Gunpowder and Convention Acts had a significant effect on Irish radicalism, ultimately proving the death knell for the rekindled Irish Volunteers. Yet, notwithstanding the impact of such legislation on wider radicalism, as far as Tone’s political ideas were concerned, these Acts served as further evidence that the government could not claim to represent the Irish people.

The cumulative impact of these circumstances upon the development of Tone’s ideas can be seen in his statements from 1794 onwards. It was at this point, in the run-up to his exile in America, that he vowed at a United Irish meeting at Cave Hill “never to desist in our efforts, until we had subverted the authority of England over our country”, in so doing, creating possibly his most famous quote and providing an image which has so often been conjured by later nationalists as part of Tone’s cult legacy.⁴⁴⁵ There has been some uncertainty about the extent to which Tone responded directly to the suppression of radicalism. Contrary to claims by his son William, Tone is not mentioned as one of the defence counsel at the Drogheda trials, which prosecuted Catholic merchants and the proprietors of the *Northern Star*, the United Irishmen’s newspaper – these trials formed part of a considerable attack on the radical press, printing houses being shut down and publications heavily censored.⁴⁴⁶ Some of this crackdown was widely interpreted as punishment for the 1793 Catholic Relief Act, of which Tone had been one of the leading architects by campaigning and pamphleteering. The British and Irish parliaments had felt pressured into granting the Catholic Relief Act amidst the uproar of the French Revolution; notably, it had extended the franchise to Catholics who met the necessary voting requirements.

⁴⁴⁴ Eamon O’Flaherty, “The Catholic Convention and Anglo-Irish Politics, 1791-93,” *Archivium Hibernicum*, 1985, 14–34.

⁴⁴⁵ Tone, *Life*, 128.

⁴⁴⁶ “A Full and Accurate Report of the Trial of James Bird, Roger Hamill, and Casimir Delahoyde ... Patrick Kenny, Bartholomew Walsh, Matthew Read and Patrick Tiernan, before the Honourable Mr Justice Downes, in the Criminal Court of Drogheda, April the 23d, 1794” (H Fitzpatrick, 1794).

Regardless of whether he was present at the Drogheda trials or not, Tone was clearly aware of British and Irish government strategy towards radicalism, as it is referenced a number of times in his *Statement on the Situation of Ireland*.⁴⁴⁷ The document was completed in April 1794, written by Tone at the request of another United Irishman, Archibald Hamilton Rowan (1751-1834), whom he had visited regularly in prison at Newgate. It was meant to be given to the radical preacher and activist, the Reverend William Jackson, but it was intercepted and subsequently used as evidence at the reverend's trial. The fact that it was written in Tone's hand was what ultimately implicated him in the case, at which point he fled to America. Just as Tone's early writings portrayed his understanding of what made an Irish 'citizen', this document reveals his ideas about how a hostile political climate had repressed national virtue, preventing Irishmen from properly asserting opposition to government legislation. He describes the Irish government as a "government of force" in order to explain a lack of revolt from the people. In addition, he suggests that political apathy could be attributed to the fact that "public spirit is completely depressed by the recent persecution, the gunpowder act, convention bill ... so that they have no way, with safety to themselves, of expressing their discontents".⁴⁴⁸ Not only were Ireland's people prevented from "expressing their discontents" in extra-parliamentary ways, they were unable to be represented politically either, due to the measures he cites here.

In spite of his scathing opposition to Britain's crackdown on radicalism, it is clear that Tone was cautious of being associated with Jackson after his trial. Jackson had made his initial approaches to the United Irishmen because he believed that, in the Irish, he had found a receptive audience for the spread of French republicanism. The Reverend, who was Irish-born but spent much of his life in England, had not reckoned with his ally and a man he had travelled with, John Cockayne, betraying his plans to British Prime Minister Pitt. Before he could be sentenced, Jackson ended the affair in dramatic fashion, swallowing poison in the dock. In relating the affair, Tone was evidently wary that his activities were being monitored. For instance, in a letter to fellow United Irishmen Arthur O'Connor in October 1795, Tone is dismissive of his acquaintance with the Reverend, describing his "supposed connection with the late Mr Jackson".⁴⁴⁹ He makes similar comments in his 'Statement of Communications with William Jackson' in May 1794.⁴⁵⁰ The letter to O'Connor is naturally more illuminative of Tone's genuine views, given that it is sent to another United Irish member.

Nevertheless, his association with Jackson was clearly accepted in many quarters, even leading to suggestions his role as agent to the Catholics came to an end because of their links. In another

⁴⁴⁷ Tone, "Statement of the Situation of Ireland, Found on Jackson's Arrest, April 1794."

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid. 277-80.

⁴⁴⁹ Wolfe Tone, "Letter to Arthur O'Connor (MP for Philipstown, 1790-95), 20 October 1795," in *Life*, 285. O'Connor became a United Irishman in 1796.

⁴⁵⁰ Wolfe Tone, "Statement of Communications with William Jackson [May 3rd 1794]," in *Life*.

instance, quoted by R.R. Madden, Tone aired his suspicions about his meetings with Jackson: “I did not then nor since ask Mr A. [Counsellor M’Nally] how he became acquainted with the gentleman, nor do I yet know who introduced him.”⁴⁵¹ Jackson was by no means the only one of Tone’s associates who faced trial, some of them much closer friends. Drennan, as well as the Northern Star proprietors – the newspaper ran until it was stopped in 1797 – were also arrested, though it is possible that these resonated less deeply with Tone because the trials ended in not-guilty verdicts.⁴⁵² As much as Tone tried to detach himself from his direct involvement with Jackson personally, the suppression of radical activity in Ireland was nonetheless a useful tool to demonstrate what he perceived as England’s restrictive measures.

Thus, as Tone gave up on the hope of reform within the existing parliamentary system, he turned to France to aid his new cause of Irish republicanism. In the light of the aforementioned legislation, he stresses “an invasion, in sufficient force, would be supported” by the Irish population, so long as a French military expedition contained sufficient numbers.⁴⁵³ The United Irishmen were divided on whether to seek military aid from abroad. While not all of his fellow members wanted to go down that route, Tone’s decision to do so is evidenced by the fact that he began writing to members of the French government from August 1795, starting with Pierre Auguste Adet, French minister to the United States of America (Tone was by this time in Philadelphia).⁴⁵⁴ The idea of seeking foreign intervention was relatively unusual, and unlike many political theorists of the eighteenth century – though there are some exceptions, such as those in Poland, America, and Corsica – Tone was not writing for a nation in control of its own government. Hence, where previous thinkers such as Locke, believed the people could establish liberty from within the state, Tone had to adapt this message to a peculiarly Irish context by seeking foreign assistance.

The Irish situation was indeed peculiar in that Britain was not just acting out of a fear of Jacobinism, as it could be argued was the case in much of its 1790s foreign policy, but out of a longer-held fear about the role of Catholics and Dissenters in the state. Tone believed that several different groups within Ireland - not only radicals - were alienated. The Dissenters were “enemies to the English power, from reason and reflection”, while the Catholics held the same view “from hatred to the English name”.⁴⁵⁵ His understanding of the Dissenting tradition will be further discussed in Chapter Four, where he references them again while in France. Tone used the suppression of all these groups,

⁴⁵¹ Madden, *The United Irishmen: Their Lives and Times*, 44.

⁴⁵² John Francis Larkin, *The Trial of William Drennan: On a Trial for Sedition, in the Year 1794 and His Intended Defence* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1991).

⁴⁵³ Tone, “Statement of the Situation of Ireland, Found on Jackson’s Arrest, April 1794.”

⁴⁵⁴ Wolfe Tone, “Letter to Pierre-Auguste Adet, August 1795,” ed. J.J. St Mark, *Eire-Ireland* VI, no. 4 (Winter 1971): 15–16.

⁴⁵⁵ Tone, “Statement of the Situation of Ireland, Found on Jackson’s Arrest, April 1794,” 277–80.

which was linked at least at some level to an insecurity brought about by the French Revolution, to create a sense of otherness, pitting the oppressed Irish against the tyrannical British government. It was not a sentiment shared across the board, however, with much of the Catholic hierarchy having encouraged their subjects, especially throughout the seventeenth century and still to some extent in the eighteenth century, to be subdued and therefore appear loyal to the Crown.⁴⁵⁶

Opposition to radical movements within Britain and Ireland, as well as persecution against Catholics and Dissenters, fuelled Tone's narrative of a United Irish movement opposing a tyrannical system of government that could not claim to represent the entirety of the population. His writings from 1794 onwards show an increasing move towards republicanism and this can be pinpointed as the moment where he appears to have shifted from demands of reform to revolution, albeit it was not a time when Tone was most prolific in his writings apart from the illuminating *Statement on the Situation of Ireland*. The circumstances of the years 1793-5, from the trial of the Reverend Jackson, to Tone leaving Ireland, had immense personal consequences which may explain why the regularity of his writings seems to have reduced. His efforts at reform exhausted, upon his exile he began to turn towards the French model of republicanism, convinced he would return to an Ireland ripe for revolution.

Conclusion:

This chapter has demonstrated that Tone's views on the relationship between the state and its citizens were a central component of his political thought. Through assessing his writings of the period 1788-1794, a number of conclusions have been drawn. Firstly, that assessments of Tone as an early romantic national figure are arguably anachronistic, because his primary focus was on classical republican notions of citizenship. Secondly, that Tone saw the cause of the majority Catholic population as central to wider Irish political rights. As Tone defined 'Irishness' not along Herderian lines of ethnicity, religion, language, or common history, but rather by democratic political participation – at least in his idealised vision of society – his position was closer to an ancient republican-inspired brand of civic 'nationalism'. Lastly, we have seen that attempts in Britain and Ireland to suppress radicalism further convinced him of the disconnect between the state and the people. It is this realization that eventually pushed him toward adopting the French model of civic republicanism.

⁴⁵⁶ Alan Ford, "'Firm Catholics' or 'Loyal Subjects'? Religious and Political Allegiance in Early Seventeenth-Century Ireland," in *Political Discourse in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, ed. D.G Boyce, R Eccleshall, and V Geoghegan (Basingstoke: Springer, 2001), 1–32; Jane Ohlmeyer, "Introduction: For God, King or Country? Political Thought and Culture in Seventeenth-Century Ireland," in *Political Thought in Seventeenth-Century Ireland: Kingdom or Colony* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1–35; McGrath, *Ireland and Empire, 1692-1770*, 15–16; Hill, "Loyalty and the Monarchy in Ireland, c. 1660-1840."

These conclusions have been reached through an analysis of a number of Tone's writings. His memoranda on the Sandwich Islands provide his earliest plans for a republican utopia based on the Roman example. Together with his shorter essays of 1790, these texts show that his views on national character were founded upon ancient republican concepts of civic virtue, which he reinterpreted in terms of 'wisdom' and 'gallantry'. As his views progressed into the 1790s, he began to identify Catholic rights as the primary cause by which he could base his arguments on allegiance to the state. The rights-focused rhetoric of his *Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland* pamphlet, as well as his other writings on the Catholic question, took inspiration from numerous sources, including Lockean discourse about the natural status of man and French revolutionary discussions of universal rights.⁴⁵⁷ He could look to example societies provided not only by ancient republics, but also in the works of those Patriot writers who had laid the foundations for arguments about self-governance.⁴⁵⁸ They had sought to stay true to the liberties of the Constitution of 1688, not the notion of 'Ireland' per se. Tone did not base his remonstrations on idealised concepts of Irish history or culture, a popular view which historians have not yet sufficiently challenged, but on more recent evidence of the flawed political relationship between Britain and Ireland.

While there were a number of intellectual inspirations behind Tone's ideas, Ireland's tense social and political backdrop must not be overlooked. This is especially true as he prioritised overcoming sectarian violence from the bottom upwards, as shown by his meetings with the Peep o'Day Boys and his work for the General Committee of the Catholics. As Tone's radical career gathered pace, it was the 1793 clampdown on radicalism that cemented his vision for Ireland as a self-governing nation. It was becoming abundantly clear to Tone that the political apparatus in Ireland differed too starkly from the people it was supposedly representing, as summarised by the treatment of radicals who were seeking reform on behalf of the wider population. His 1794 *Statement on the Situation of Ireland* suggested the Irish people had only been unable to mobilise politically because their spirit, or political virtue and participation in the state, had been suppressed by the English government and its continued control over Irish affairs.⁴⁵⁹ Then, the United Irishmen's own treatment pushed them further towards France and its newly-installed republican system.

While Tone can certainly be described as a 'precursor' to later Irish romantic nationalism, his political thought can in fact be more accurately understood as being based on ancient republican ideals of the

⁴⁵⁷ Tone, "An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland".

⁴⁵⁸ Leo Damrosch, *Jonathan Swift: His Life and His World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 282; Robert Mahony, *Jonathan Swift: The Irish Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 13; Joseph McMinn, *Jonathan Swift and the Arts* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2010), 46–50.

⁴⁵⁹ Tone, "Statement of the Situation of Ireland, Found on Jackson's Arrest, April 1794."

relationship between citizens and the state. Not only does this go some way towards explaining how his message was able to incorporate different social, cultural, and religious elements within Ireland, it clarifies his views on popular consent, as only when groups such as Catholic enjoyed political rights could they demonstrate republican virtue and take part in the nation. This would become central to his views on sovereignty and would continue to inform his political agenda as he left for America.

Chapter Three: Tone and American Political Thought

In August 1795, Tone began his exile in America, following his implication in the case against the radical preacher William Jackson.⁴⁶⁰ The purpose of this chapter is to consider the ways in which his political ideas developed at the contact of American republicanism, from his arrival in the United States until his departure in February 1796. As is well established, his plans for a rebellion in Ireland informed much of his activity in Philadelphia, at that time the American capital, while some of his time was spent resentfully on farm work in order for him to make a living.⁴⁶¹ Yet he remained keenly engaged in radical circles, meeting with other exiled Irish radicals, among them United Irishmen Dr James Reynolds and Archibald Hamilton Rowan.⁴⁶²

Biographers of Tone have highlighted his unhappiness in America. Elliott emphasises the emotional toll his exile took upon him and his wife Matilda, even suggesting that his separation from his friends back in Ireland pushed him towards more extreme measures and informed his negotiations with the French government.⁴⁶³ Elliott's biography also highlights his time there as a "fundamental" step in turning him from a radical with an "ill-formulated" political philosophy into a "fully-fledged revolutionary", though as has been outlined thus far, much of this shift in fact took place before he left Ireland.⁴⁶⁴ Wilson makes a similar case for Tone's disillusionment in his *Hordes of Wild Irishmen* chapter.⁴⁶⁵ Cronin, meanwhile, has noted the significance of the events happening around Tone, with American politics torn between support for Britain and France as the two countries went to war in 1793.⁴⁶⁶ Curiously, however, C. Desmond Greaves, one of the few historians to give any real weight to Tone's economic ideas, pays little attention to his time in America despite this stage of his life providing some of his more concrete discussions on the subject.⁴⁶⁷ This chapter takes a different view

⁴⁶⁰ This was not an unusual move, with many radicals from England, Scotland, and Ireland also leaving for America in the 1790s. For more on the Irish exodus, see: Wilson, *United Irishmen, United States: Immigrant Radicals in the Early Republic*. Kerby A. Miller, "Liberty, Intolerance, and Profit: Irish Emigration, 1783-1814," in *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 169-93. David Brundage, "Irish Nationalists in America: The Politics of Exile, 1798-1998" (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 21.

⁴⁶¹ Tone, *Life*, 133. In this section of his memoirs, he describes his move to find farm work in Princeton and his shock at the cost of living in Philadelphia.

⁴⁶² These associations are explained in further detail in Rowan's memoirs: Archibald Hamilton Rowan, *Autobiography of Archibald Hamilton Rowan, Esq: With Additions and Illustrations*, ed. William Hamilton Drummond (Dublin: Webb and Chapman, 1840), 280-315.

⁴⁶³ Elliott, *Wolfe Tone*, 249-71.

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 260.

⁴⁶⁵ David A. Wilson, "Hordes of Wild Irishmen," in *United Irishmen, United States: Immigrant Radicals in the Early Republic*, 36-58.

⁴⁶⁶ Cronin and Roche, *Freedom the Wolfe Tone Way*, 75.

⁴⁶⁷ Greaves, *Theobald Wolfe Tone and the Irish Nation*. One of Greaves' several Marxist imprints on the period, it is argued that Tone's polarisations of the 'masses' vs the Ascendancy were based on class and that much of his politics was informed by Ireland's economic and social conditions.

to much of the previous scholarship by seeking to analyse the impact of Tone's exile upon his political philosophy in a way that is yet to be undertaken, and by arguing that the ideas of Locke (1632-1704) and Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) led Tone further towards complex values of liberalism and property-holding on the one hand, but duty and virtue on the other. It will predominantly focus on American republicanism after the late 1770s, closer to Tone's arrival, rather than the early debates of the colonial era.

Tone's time in America was short but has nonetheless provided a number of source materials from which it is possible to gauge developments in his ideas. In this period of his life, he was no longer writing pamphlets and the bulk of his writings are made up of personal correspondence. It is perhaps significant that of all the leading United Irish figures back home, Tone first wrote to Thomas Russell, arguably his closest ally in the organisation due to their shared visions of social cohesion and religious tolerance. His letters to Russell discuss his interpretation of representative government, his alarm at the 1794 Jay Treaty which saw George Washington (1732-1799) align himself with Britain against France, and his experiences in Philadelphia. With fear of corruption such a key element of American republicanism, it is telling that Tone reaffirmed his views on citizen character in his correspondence, chastising the greed of the people he met, but defending the Irishmen he encountered by speculating that they had been corrupted by their government at home.

While he also wrote to the radical Irish MP and later, United Irish member Arthur O'Connor, much of Tone's most useful correspondence for providing insight into his political ideas from this time comes from his letters to Pierre Auguste Adet, the French minister to the United States. Tone met with Adet soon after his arrival and wrote his *Memorandum on the State of Ireland* (1795) at his request.⁴⁶⁸ The document was Tone's first attempt since moving into exile to secure French aid for a rebellion, discussing the Irish situation by using two new, and identifiably American arguments: the imposition of unfair taxes on Irish Catholics, and the need for creating a people's army, rather than Irishmen fighting on behalf of Britain. Meanwhile, Tone's updates to his diary were sporadic. It appears he did not make his first entry until February 2, 1796, several months after leaving Ireland. There is, of course, the possibility that earlier passages may have been lost. Yet there remains sufficient material, collected from a short period of Tone's life and thus giving a clear snapshot of his thinking at that point, to reconstruct his experiences in exile and to discuss how the ideas he encountered informed his subsequent political agenda.

⁴⁶⁸ 'Pierre Auguste Adet to the Committee of Public Safety, 1 October 1795 J.J. St Mark, "Wolfe Tone's Diplomacy in America, August-December 1795," *Eire-Ireland* 7, no. 4 (1972): 7. Adet claims to have met with an "Irish Patriot who has served the cause of the oppressed Catholics". Wolfe Tone, "Memorandum by Tone on the State of Ireland," August 13, 1795, AF III, carton 64, dossier 264, Archives Nationales, Paris, Directoire Exécutif.

From his writings, it becomes clear that Tone became more committed to ancient republican ideas during his time in America, largely due to the prevalence of firstly Lockean, and subsequently Jeffersonian discourse. This chapter will argue firstly, that the core principles of the American constitution, of the sovereignty of the people and government accountability strongly influenced Tone's ideas. Secondly, this analysis will seek to demonstrate the importance of Jefferson's agrarian vision for his intellectual and political evolution. Thirdly, it will be discussed how Tone's engagement with Lockean economic and political thought informed his arguments, such as his views in favour of property rights. This will allow for a reassessment of Tone, who has previously been seen as lacking any real interest in the economic sphere and whose intellectual development in America has tended to be glossed over.

The American context

Tone's ship arrived in America just over a decade on from the end of the Revolutionary War of 1775-83. In the conflict's origins, there could be found a number of subjects which had proven of interest to Irish Patriots. America's colonists had protested against a lack of representation in the British parliament, the imposition of unfair taxes, and their associated financing of Britain's participation in the French and Indian wars (1754-1763), a conflict between Britain and France to establish dominance in north America.⁴⁶⁹ Similar arguments about Ireland not participating in British conflicts had been made in Tone's own 1791 pamphlet, *Spanish War!*⁴⁷⁰ American soldiers did participate against the French on the side of the British, but an increase in tax in the wake of the war prompted unrest. In 1764, a Sugar Tax was introduced and a year later, a Stamp Act brought in a tax on all printed materials.⁴⁷¹ The Sugar Act had been of particular importance because it was the first tax – at least, the first to be fully enforced – that was introduced in order to raise revenue, unlike previous taxes which had been used to regulate commerce. For the American colonists, this set a dangerous precedent. The Stamp Act, meanwhile, was supposed to fund the continued presence of British troops after the French and Indian wars, though it was also a way of regulating the press. Colonists felt that they had already made a sufficient contribution to the war effort, but their chief grievance was that such taxes were being levied without their consent.

⁴⁶⁹ John Ferling, “‘To Crush the Spirit of the Colonies’ - 1776-1770,” in *A Leap in the Dark: The Struggle to Create the American Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 53–87; Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2011), 10–20; Edmund S. Morgan, *The Birth of the Republic, 1763-89*, vol. 4 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 5–61.

⁴⁷⁰ Tone, *Spanish War!*

⁴⁷¹ Reid, *Constitutional History of the American Revolution*, 194–208; Edmund S. Morgan and Helen Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis: Prologue to Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1953).

Even once the Stamp Act had been repealed because of these protests, the Declaratory Act of 1766 – not to be confused with the 1720 Act of the same name affecting Ireland – affirmed that the Westminster parliament still had the right to raise taxes in the colonies in future. The 1766 Act came directly off the back of the Sugar Act (1764) and the Stamp Act (1765), the legislation having prompted questions about whether Britain could impose such taxes.⁴⁷² Out of this hostile climate, the notion of “no taxation without representation” began to take hold.⁴⁷³ The slogan epitomised the colonists’ sentiment that taxes could not be raised without their consent, as they enjoyed no representation in the British parliament. Unlike Irish Patriots arguing for legislative independence on the basis that they were Irish citizens, the American colonists wanted to be treated as British citizens. Attempts to convince the colonies of ‘virtual representation’, the idea that MPs at Westminster could speak on behalf of all British subjects and not just those in their own constituencies, proved unsuccessful. In Britain, the stance of the colonists had at least attracted sympathy from some elements of the Whig party. Burke had suggested in a 1774 speech to the British Parliament that while it would be wrong to curb the British government’s powers relating to America, the imposition of such taxes should not be used “as a means of supply” to raise revenue and only as a last resort, questioning whether America did enjoy virtual representation at all.⁴⁷⁴

All these developments played a role in the breakout of the American Revolutionary War (1775-83). The colonists moved from aspiring to the same rights as British citizens, to demanding full political independence. In 1776, the Declaration of Independence was recognised, though it was not until 1789, much closer in time to Tone’s arrival, that the first quadrennial election was held, with Washington elected. It is not surprising that this American backdrop should have resonated with Tone, who had just fled Ireland because of his increasingly radical arguments against British rule. Two decades on from the most significant milestones in American independence, he found himself in a United States which was still debating its relatively new-found political identity. Whereas he would have been broadly aware of these debates while in Ireland, it was during his exile that he really got to grips with the most pertinent political questions affecting the new American republic.

⁴⁷² Edmund S. Morgan and Helen Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis: Prologue to Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1953), 297–301.

⁴⁷³ John Phillip Reid, *The Concept of Representation in the Age of the American Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 14–19; Jack P. Greene, “Empire Confronted, 1764-1766,” in *The Constitutional Origins of the American Revolution*, 67–104; Justin du Rivage, “Taxing America,” in *Revolution Against Empire: Taxes, Politics, and the Origins of American Independence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 53–77.

⁴⁷⁴ Edmund Burke, *Speech of Edmund Burke, Esq. On American Taxation - April 19, 1774* (London: J. Dodsley, 1775), 92–93.

American republicanism – as an intellectual movement relating to civic values, rather than necessarily denoting the ‘republican’ system of government – had started to blossom from the 1760s. Scholars have traced many of its ideological roots to a combination of the English seventeenth-century republican tradition and the Renaissance-era revival of ancient Greek and Roman ideas about civic virtue.⁴⁷⁵ Characterised by its emphasis on liberty and individual rights, exponents of this emerging school of American republicanism took inspiration from a host of English sources, particularly Harrington, Milton, and Sidney.⁴⁷⁶ However, it is Locke who has traditionally been accepted as the key thinker in shaping late eighteenth-century American liberalism, primarily because of the nation’s development as a commercial state.⁴⁷⁷ Jefferson’s original draft of the Declaration of Independence also drew on Lockean principles about how the American government would be accountable to its people and would be responsible for delivering their natural rights of life, liberty, and property.⁴⁷⁸

By the mid-point of the 1790s, George Washington was presiding over a divided political scene, a situation exacerbated by Britain’s part in the anti-French coalition of the French Revolutionary Wars. On the one hand, Jefferson and his democratic-republican party hailed the spread of the democratic ideals that had been popularised by events in France, while on the other, Alexander Hamilton’s Federalists insisted on the need to maintain commercial links with Britain. Hamilton planned to do this by withholding support for the French Revolution, particularly once it had entered its most violent phase between September 1793 and July 1794.⁴⁷⁹ In November 1794, Washington had agreed terms on the Jay Treaty, so-called because of its chief architect, the Federalist politician John Jay. It was signed between the US and Britain with the hope of re-establishing the two countries’ trading

⁴⁷⁵ Donald S. Lutz, “The Relative Influence of European Writers on Late Eighteenth-Century American Political Thought,” *The American Political Science Review* 78, no. 1 (March 1984): 189–97. Robert E. Shalhope, *The Roots of Democracy: American Thought and Culture, 1760-1800* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004).

⁴⁷⁶ Bernard Bailyn, “Sources and Traditions,” in *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Harvard University Press, 2012), 22–55; Mortimer N.S. Sellers, “English Commonwealths,” in *American Republicanism: Roman Ideology in the United States Constitution* (Basingstoke: Springer, 2016), 102–18; J.G.A. Pocock, “Value and History in the Prerevolutionary Atlantic,” in *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*, 333–553; Gordon S. Wood, “Republicanism,” in *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Knopf, 2011), 95–213.

⁴⁷⁷ Carl Becker, *The Declaration of Independence: A Study on the History of Political Ideas* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1922). Despite being written almost a century ago, Becker’s text is still viewed as one of the most important texts on Lockean ideas in America. Steven M. Dworetz, *The Unvarnished Doctrine: Locke, Liberalism, and the American Revolution* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1994). Dworetz argues that the founding fathers took their justification for revolution from Locke. Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought Since the Revolution* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1955). Jerome Huyler, *Locke in America: The Moral Philosophy of the Founding Era* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995).

⁴⁷⁸ Locke’s influence on Jefferson’s Declaration has become the orthodox view since Becker’s seminal work.

⁴⁷⁹ James H. Read, *Madison, Hamilton, Wilson, and Jefferson* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2000). Carson Holloway, *Hamilton versus Jefferson in the Washington Administration: Completing the Founding or Betraying the Founding?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015). John H. Aldrich, “Did Hamilton, Jefferson, and Madison ‘Cause’ the U.S. Government Shutdown? The Institutional Path from an Eighteenth Century Republic to a Twenty-First Century Democracy,” *Perspectives on Politics* 13, no. 1 (2015): 7–23.

relationship.⁴⁸⁰ A number of shortcomings in the treaty made it unpopular in terms of public opinion. It failed to open up trade in the profitable West Indies to America and US sailors were still not protected from impressment by the British navy. At any rate, signing off such a deal with Britain was interpreted by the democratic-republicans as a conscious decision to take sides in that country's conflict with France, betraying American values in the process. Several of Jefferson's allies in the cabinet maintained their support for the French Revolution and feared that Britain's veto on America trading with France would be needlessly prohibitive. The treaty did, however, solve a number of issues dating back to the 1783 Treaty of Paris and the end of the Revolutionary war, withdrawing British troops from the northwest and settling outstanding compensation owed to British and American merchants.

The Jay Treaty provided one notable moment of discord, but there were broader, more fundamental issues which divided politics. The likes of Jefferson and fellow statesman James Madison emphasised the importance of utilizing America's existing agrarian economy, while in contrast, Hamilton hoped to emulate Britain in its banking, manufacturing, and its system of centralized government.⁴⁸¹ Jefferson, himself heavily informed by classical republican notions of citizen virtue, believed farmers were the most important element of a society and that they, as well as their land, would be exploited and corrupted by a commercial system. For Tone, his time in America was therefore an opportunity to engage with these ideas more fully.

Sovereignty, Popular Consent, and Government Accountability

For many contemporaries, America provided the most prominent example of a large state attempting to accommodate both a working democratic society and a representative system of government, even if it was far from universally accepted that this experiment would last in the long term.⁴⁸² This system of representative democracy was one to which the United Irishmen aspired, leading member Arthur O'Connor saying that Irish Catholics had a "present, ardent love of representative democracy".⁴⁸³ Though O'Connor also pointed to the French model, by the time Tone was in America, the revolution's original course had substantively deviated. The Constitution of the Year I [June 1793-

⁴⁸⁰ Hugh B. Hammett, "The Jay Treaty: Crisis Diplomacy in the New Nation," *Social Studies* 65, no. 1 (January 1974): 10–18; Todd Estes, "England, France, and the Foreign Context of American Politics," in *The Jay Treaty Debate, Public Opinion, and the Evolution of Early American Political Culture* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006), 13–33.

⁴⁸¹ Carson Holloway, "A Clash of Rival Party Leaders," in *Hamilton versus Jefferson in the Washington Administration: Completing the Founding or Betraying the Founding?*, 113–203.

⁴⁸² Whereas democracy had been seen in action in small city-states such as Geneva – or in ancient Athens – there were concerns that it could not function as a system in a larger state, a view is best associated with Montesquieu: Montesquieu, *Montesquieu: The Spirit of the Laws*, 124.

August 1795], which would have been fresh in the minds of political observers, had departed from the more moderate constitution of 1791, now drawing on the Montagnards' interpretation of the Rousseauian tradition of direct democracy.⁴⁸⁴ The violent shift of the French Revolution may explain why for Tone, it was the American model – itself influenced by the classical system – which more directly informed Tone's plans for Ireland, as this chapter will demonstrate.

Ideas about sovereignty had developed throughout the preceding three centuries, from Jean Bodin (1530-1596) to Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), to Rousseau (1712-1778), gradually placing increased significance on 'the people' as the ultimate source of power.⁴⁸⁵ In Ireland, these ideas had been well-received, particularly in the form of Locke's *Two Treatises of Government*, which had proved popular and had influenced the Irish Patriot tradition indirectly through the medium of Locke's friend and protégé Molyneux.⁴⁸⁶ Locke had summarised the issue thus:

To understand political power right, and derive it from its original, we must consider, what state all men are naturally in, and that is, *a state of perfect* freedom to order their actions, and dispose of their possessions and persons, as they think fit, within the bounds of the law of nature, without asking leave, or depending on the will of any other man.⁴⁸⁷

Given the prominence of Lockean discourse in post-revolutionary America, it would have been almost impossible for Tone not to have encountered it. This should be noted, especially when historians such as Elliott have argued that Tone "rejected" Locke after 1791.⁴⁸⁸ Elliott suggests this because with Catholics lacking the means to be represented, Tone doubted the merits of 'tacit consent'. Similarly, Smyth points to Tone only citing Locke once and that was to argue over the implications of tacit consent for Catholics in Ireland.⁴⁸⁹ However, due to the prominence of Locke's ideas in America at this time, the question of his influence on Tone requires more scrutiny.

His time in America also provided him with a number of arguments in favour of the Irish Catholic political representation that are yet to be connected to his exile. Firstly, the idea of 'no taxation without representation' was of particular importance in America. Secondly, the general concept of a 'people's army', though not a peculiarly American idea, was prominent in the public imagination at that time.

⁴⁸⁴ R.R. Palmer, *The Age of Democratic Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), 214.

⁴⁸⁵ Richard Tuck, *The Sleeping Sovereign: The Invention of Modern Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 249–84.

⁴⁸⁶ Molyneux cites Locke's *Two Treatises* in: Molyneux, *The Case of Ireland's Being Bound by Acts of Parliament in England, Stated*, 20.

⁴⁸⁷ Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, 189.

⁴⁸⁸ Elliott, *Wolfe Tone*, 85.

⁴⁸⁹ Smyth, "Wolfe Tone's Library: The United Irishmen and 'Enlightenment,'" 424.

Both of these are discussed in his *Memorandum on the state of Ireland*.⁴⁹⁰ Within two weeks of his arrival, he set to work on the memorandum upon the request of Adet, the French minister to the US, its aim to provide a snapshot of popular opinion in Ireland and to list grievances against the British administration with a view to welcoming French assistance. Focusing particularly on Irish Catholics, he notes that “among other outrages, exorbitant taxes have been levied to support a cause they hate”.⁴⁹¹ This built upon the arguments of his earlier *Spanish War!* pamphlet, that Catholics were unable to oppose their part in the proposed conflict with Spain given their lack of parliamentary representation.⁴⁹² American opposition to the French and Indian wars stemmed from similar issues and proved a turning point in the relationship with Britain, even if colonists were keen to be treated as British, unlike Irish reformers. Colonists had originally demanded the same rights – specifically, a presence in the parliament – as other British subjects, as opposed to full political independence. This changed as a result of measures like the sugar tax, brought about by the American Revenue Act, which came to represent a symbol of opposition to British governance once demands for ‘no taxation without representation’ had been rejected.⁴⁹³

Britain’s motivations in the French and Indian wars were territorial, in the sense that they were aimed at better securing their colonial position in north America, and commercial too, as the Hudson Bay area was key to the fur trade.⁴⁹⁴ Tone’s argument, that America had been right not to support British military efforts, was not based upon the wars themselves – he had already shown his enthusiasm for the idea of virtuous patriots defending their homeland – but stemmed from the notion that only subjects who had a political stake in the nation should be expected to fight for it. This was why he was still keen to use this example of a conflict which had ended three decades earlier. His memorandum recalls:

Whenever it has pleased [Britain] to engage in a war, the poor Irish have been forced ... to die of hunger, or to engage in the armies or the Navy, of which they ordinarily composed two-thirds.⁴⁹⁵

In this way, Tone’s *Memorandum* used the American example as a model which would facilitate the development of the Irish military. Thus, while military participation was key to the classical republican ideal, the Irish should instead be participating in a ‘people’s army’, similar to the

⁴⁹⁰ Tone, “Memorandum by Tone on the State of Ireland.”

⁴⁹¹ Ibid.

⁴⁹² Wolfe Tone, *Spanish War!*

⁴⁹³ John Phillip Reid, *Constitutional History of the American Revolution: The Authority to Tax*, vol. 2 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 204–8.

⁴⁹⁴ Richard Hall, *Atlantic Politics, Military Strategy and the French and Indian War - War, Culture and Society, 1750-1850* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

⁴⁹⁵ Tone, “Memorandum by Tone on the State of Ireland.”

American example, rather than fighting on behalf of Britain. The success of the militias in the American Revolutionary war was reflected in attempts to continue the system after its conclusion, rather than moving to a centralized army.⁴⁹⁶ Equally successful were attempts to convince ordinary citizens that military participation was an outward expression of virtue.⁴⁹⁷ Charles Lee, a general in the Continental Army during the War of Independence, had compared American citizens to the ancient Spartans, willing to sacrifice themselves and “ever ready” to serve.⁴⁹⁸ It was not possible to construct such an image of Irish citizens. In Ireland, with Britain quashing any prospect of revolution by sending “six to eight English regiments with the debris of her army from the Continent; this attached to the Irish militia rises to about 30,000 men” and therefore constituting an English-controlled militia, rather than a people’s militia. Britain had experience of dealing with militia groups in Ireland, such as the Volunteers who had played a role in agitating for legislative independence. Ireland had already “furnished to England no less than 180,000 men for the fleet and army” and had provided England with provisions both “for her fleet, and much of them for her troops in the West Indies”, as Tone details in a further letter to Adet.⁴⁹⁹

It may have been these complications and the dynamic of how an Irish ‘people’s army’ would be dealt with by Britain that led Tone to write imprecisely on the subject. While he does not give sufficient detail on how a people’s army would operate, or even who would make up its rank and file, it is possible to speculate based on his previous writings (albeit his ideas may have changed in the intervening years) and the fact that he wrote about this military vision during his time in America, hoping to follow the US example. In his plans for a military colony on the Sandwich Islands, he had hypothesized a Roman-style system where land could be used as a reward. Given that he had earlier stated that citizenship should still be linked to ‘gentlemen’ and those who held a stake in society, in the case of a people’s army this may have manifested in land owners being rewarded with greater roles in the military, as these would have been the people best equipped to serve Ireland’s interests.

Under the existing system, with Irishmen consequently fighting against their own interests, it was relatively innovative of Tone to link the idea of representation and military service – that is to say, that each ‘nation’ should have their own state to defend, and that Irish citizens should not be expected to essentially defend another state. The prominence of standing armies earlier in the century – prior to

⁴⁹⁶ Tal Tovy, “Militia or Regular Army?: The Debate on the Character of the American Army during the Revolution,” *European Journal of American Studies* 5, no. 1 (January 24, 2010).

⁴⁹⁷ Ricardo A. Herrera, “Service, Sacrifice, and Duty,” in *For Liberty and the Republic: The American Citizen as Soldier, 1775-1861* (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 27–85; John W. Shy, “American Strategy: Charles Lee and the Radical Alternative,” in *A People Numerous and Armed: Reflections on the Military Struggle for American Independence* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990), 133–63.

⁴⁹⁸ Charles Lee, *The Lee Papers: 1776-1778* (New York: New York Historical Society, 1873), 177.

⁴⁹⁹ Tone, “Letter to Pierre Auguste Adet.”

the increasing shift towards citizen armies during the French Revolution – had meant issues such as mercenaryism and the organizational make-up of armies had already been much debated by contemporaries.⁵⁰⁰ In Britain, for example, since the mid-seventeenth century, the law had ascribed that only the king was permitted to raise an army and led to a clampdown on militias, though this was also highly relevant in late eighteenth century Ireland, where militia groups had grown in number and prominence.⁵⁰¹ In some quarters, including in Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, standing armies were seen as a positive sign of a nation's development towards commercial civilisation.⁵⁰² However, standing armies continued to be feared by neo-republican thinkers, who associated them with political corruption.⁵⁰³ Where Tone differed from the republican consensus that citizenship and military service should be linked, was in his arguments that the latter should thereby secure political representation.

In spite of this ostensibly inward-looking standpoint focused only on Ireland, the universalism found in Tone's *Memorandum* was not entirely estranged from the American experience. Although by the mid-1790s, America had experienced its revolution, it had enjoyed the support of France under Louis XVI, who aligned himself against Britain on the side of the colonists.⁵⁰⁴ In Ireland, Tone was referencing a nation still deemed oppressed, hence why he continued to discuss assistance from France – so while this was not akin to America's situation by the time he was there, it was not dissimilar from the country's recent history. His hopes for French aid were in line with Jefferson's stance on the British-French conflict, but at the same time it represented a move away from America's isolationism of the mid-1790s. Jefferson would warn of "entangling alliances", while in his September 1796 Farewell Address, George Washington declared that "in regard to foreign nations", America should have "as little political connection as possible".⁵⁰⁵ Such a stance had become clear with the 1793 Neutrality Proclamation upon the outbreak of war between Britain and France.⁵⁰⁶ In

⁵⁰⁰ Alan Forrest, "Citizenship and Military Service," in *The French Revolution and the Meaning of Citizenship*, ed. Renée Waldinger, Philip Dawson, and Isser Woloch (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1993), 153–65; Caroline Varin, "Soldiers and National Security," in *Mercenaries, Hybrid Armies and National Security: Private Soldiers and the State in the 21st Century* (London: Routledge, 2014), 29–49.

⁵⁰¹ John R. Western, *The English Militia in Eighteenth Century: The Story of a Political Issue, 1660-1802* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1965), 16.

⁵⁰² Adam Smith, *Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations - A Reader's Guide*, ed. Jerry Evensky (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 175–81.

⁵⁰³ Ian McDaniel, "Military Government and Empire in the Scottish Enlightenment," in *Adam Ferguson in the Scottish Enlightenment* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013), 39–64.

⁵⁰⁴ Tom Shachtman, *How the French Saved America: Soldiers, Sailors, Diplomats, Louis XVI, and the Success of a Revolution* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2017), *passim*.

⁵⁰⁵ Thomas Jefferson, "First Inaugural Address," in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. James P. McClure, vol. 33 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 134–52. George Washington, "Farewell Address," September 17, 1796, George Washington Papers, Series 2, Letterbooks 1754-1799, MSS 44693: Reel 024, Library of Congress.

⁵⁰⁶ Christopher J Young, "Connecting the President and the People: Washington's Neutrality, Genet's Challenge, and Hamilton's Fight for Public Support," *Journal of the Early Republic* 31, no. 3 (2011): 435–66;

contrast, Tone was in favour of political connections with other states, a universalism that might be associated with the French revolutionaries. This was something which was compatible with his own views on civic virtue and the role of citizens. He hoped that Ireland could achieve its freedom through the assistance of other states, rather than through its own people. Nonetheless, this is not necessarily irreconcilable with his wider ancient republicanism, which held that virtuous nations were militarily self-sufficient and shouldn't need assistance. Combining the two standpoints was, in fact, common in 1790s republicanism, at least in the French Jacobin model.⁵⁰⁷

Tone's memorandum is revealing of his emphasis on citizen participation in the state, particularly through the mediums of political representation and military service. The American revolution had largely embraced 'the people' in shaping the direction of the new state. While it has been demonstrated that Tone already had his own interpretation of political legitimacy, this was strengthened by individual perceived misjustices that he found in America, as is evident in his first letter to Thomas Russell from Philadelphia.⁵⁰⁸ The letter discussed the 'Jay Treaty', and Tone's primary interest was whether Washington would sanction it in spite of public opposition. While it is unsurprising that Tone had doubts about the treaty – with it being essentially a statement of alliance with Great Britain at a time of their conflict with revolutionary France – his disapproval is also telling of his views on popular consent. "The public mind is in a prodigious ferment here regarding the treaty with England, which is universally condemned, with the exception of the Chamber of Commerce of New York," Tone wrote to Russell.⁵⁰⁹ Such 'universal' condemnation was not entirely accurate, as the treaty did enjoy some support from Washington's allies and those who backed Federalist plans to align themselves with Britain. Tone's translation of these circumstances is therefore skewed, even if unintentionally. While much of the Senate needed to back the treaty for it to be passed and "the numbers on the division were 20 to 20, exactly the number required", Tone questions whether Washington could derive legitimacy from the Senate alone when the treaty wasn't popular among the American people. He adds:

What the President will do is not known but I suppose he will sanction the Treaty, in which case he will outlive his hard and well-earned popularity, a circumstance which I for one shall

Byron W. Daynes, "George Washington: Reluctant Occupant, Uncertain Model for the Presidency," in *George Washington and the Origins of the American Presidency*, ed. Mark J. Rozell, William D. Pederson, and Frank J. Williams (London: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2000), 3–37; Marie-jeanne Rossignol, "Early Isolationism Revisited: Neutrality and Beyond in the 1790s," *Journal of American Studies* 29, no. 2 (1995): 215–27.

⁵⁰⁷ Jason Andrew Neideman, *The General Will Is Citizenship: Inquiries into French Political Thought* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 102; Patrice L.R. Higonnet, "The Limitless Claims of the Public Sphere," in *Goodness Beyond Virtue: Jacobins During the French Revolution* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998), 125–44.

⁵⁰⁸ Wolfe Tone, "Letter to Thomas Russell," September 1, 1795, Rebellion Papers, 620/16/3/3, National Archives, Ireland.

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid. f. 3

most heartily regret; at the same time God forbid any sense of past services should overbear truth and justice.⁵¹⁰

Tone's ideas on popular consent, as expressed in his statement, that Washington may forfeit his "well-earned popularity", can be interpreted in two ways. It is possible that he viewed popular opinion as the ultimate bestowal of power, but at the very least he adhered to Whig arguments about governments needing to be accountable to the people. Indeed, it is also plausible that he had moved towards the former as a result of these experiences in America, having been somewhat closer to a typical Irish Whig view before his exile. While he believed Washington "a very honest man" and "a sincere American according to his own theory", that came with the caveat of him being "a high-flying aristocrat" who had sacrificed "public virtue" in his handlings of the divisions between the Federalists and the Democratic-Republicans.⁵¹¹

In the early stages of his exile, Tone had already begun to frequently espouse American ideas about government legitimacy, popular consent, and sovereignty and apply them to the Irish context. In these pages, therefore, a new emphasis has been placed on his relationship with the American contemporary political scene. Previous historians have tended to view this period of his life through the lens of his relationship with France, given that he was in communication with French officials and was beginning to put into action his plan for a French-backed rebellion. Regardless of his familiarity with ideas about sovereignty during his time in Ireland and Britain, his arguments were strengthened considerably by his findings in America. Hence, his first writings in Philadelphia demonstrate a number of parallels between the Irish Patriot position and that of American colonists, notably the concepts of no taxation without representation and a militia constructed of ordinary citizens.

Jeffersonian Democratic-Republicanism

By late 1795, Tone's political philosophy was becoming increasingly linked to contemporary American rhetoric, which in turn had been informed by both the classical and the English republican traditions. This was particularly true in his developing economic ideas, which were not a major feature of his writing during his time in Ireland despite the tendency among Irish Whigs to focus on economic issues.⁵¹² In the United States, America's economy was being fiercely debated at government level. Perhaps unsurprisingly given his fondness for Jefferson's own ancient republican

⁵¹⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹¹ Ibid.

⁵¹² Dunne does categorise Tone as being "markedly more conservative" on economic policies than several United Irishmen, favouring limited reform such as fairer tithes rather than abolition. Dunne, *Colonial Outsider*, 35.

rhetoric, Tone aligned himself with Jefferson's vision of an agrarian, tolerant, and virtuous society.⁵¹³ The influence of Jefferson's democratic-republican party has yet to prompt a sustained discussion in the existing literature on Tone.⁵¹⁴ Yet there is circumstantial evidence which suggests that Tone took some of his ideas straight from the pages of Jeffersonian literature. For instance, he regularly read the Jeffersonian publication *Aurora*, edited by Philadelphia journalist Benjamin Franklin Bache, whose friendship he would later utilise in his time in France as a US-based contact.⁵¹⁵

Jefferson emphasised citizenship, virtue, and a moral obligation to the republic. It was in this light that he described farmers as "the most valuable citizens", in the belief that an individual tied to their own land would subsequently be tied to the state also.⁵¹⁶ Moreover, in his "Manufactures" chapter in his *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785), he described "those who labour in the earth" as the "chosen people of God", not least because "corruption of morals in the mass of cultivators is a phenomenon of which no age nor nation has furnished an example" as he outlined his plans for a nation built on independent farmers.⁵¹⁷ Jefferson depicted America as an agrarian nation which ought to be dependent on its farmers because the alternatives, trade and manufacture, were notorious for eroding citizen virtue and threatened peace, trade also having the added pitfall of encouraging commercial rivalries between states. This could prove dangerous, as had been the case in the conflicts between Britain and France in the eighteenth century; the way the monarchies of these nations had been corrupted was a huge concern in the Enlightenment era.⁵¹⁸

The links between farming and good citizenship had first been hailed in Ancient Rome, Cato the Elder propagating the benefits of farming for developing the physical and disciplinary strength

⁵¹³ Joyce Oldham Appleby, "Economics: The Agrarian Republic," in *Thomas Jefferson and the Politics of Nature*, ed. Thomas S. Engeman (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000); Gordon S. Wood, "The Emergence of the Jeffersonian Republican Party," in *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815*, 140-74.

⁵¹⁴ Only Cronin has remarked that "naturally he was on the side of Jefferson in his sympathies, for they shared the same enlightened policies". Cronin and Roche, *Freedom the Wolfe Tone Way*, 75.

⁵¹⁵ Tone, *Life*, 485. Tone and other republicans met frequently in the *Aurora* offices in Bache's home. Jeffrey Lingam Pasley, *Artful and Designing Men: Political Professionalism in the Early American Republic, 1775-1820* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993), 262.

⁵¹⁶ Cited in: Paul B. Thompson and Thomas C. Hilde, *The Agrarian Roots of Pragmatism* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2000), 262. Lisi Krall, "Thomas Jefferson's Agrarian Vision and the Changing Nature of Property," *Journal of Economic Issues* 36, no. 1 (March 2002): 131-50. The idea of labour tying citizens to the land was first associated with Locke, as discussed further on in the context of Lockean economic principles.

⁵¹⁷ Thomas Jefferson, "Manufactures (1781)," in *Notes on the State of Virginia* (Boston: Lilly and Wait, 1832), 171-73.

⁵¹⁸ J.G.A. Pocock, "Cambridge Paradigms and Scotch Philosophers: A Study of the Relations between the Civic Humanist and the Civil Jurisprudential Interpretation of Eighteenth-Century Social Thought," in *Wealth and Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 235-52; Istvan Hont, *Jealousy of Trade: International Competition and the Nation-State in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2005), 4-37.

necessary to become a good citizen-soldier.⁵¹⁹ To his fellow democratic-republicans, Jefferson's revival of these ideas were a manifestation of a purer form of republicanism, contrary to Hamilton's plans for economic development. Hamilton's Federalists were Anglophiles in so many senses, extolling the benefits of trading with Britain while also hoping to emulate a successful commercial state in the British pattern.⁵²⁰ Inevitably, given the extent to which Ireland's own economy had been damaged by British mercantilism – for example, in their treatment of the Irish wool industry, to name but one of the most damaging examples – Tone viewed America's relationship with Britain in the light of a pre-revolutionary hostility, rather than one of mutual trading.⁵²¹ As such, Tone's rejection of the Federalist model should be traced to their intellectual roots, rather than seen simply in the immediate context of the international relations between America, Britain, and France.

The first instance of Tone siding with Jefferson, and consequently against Hamilton, was over debates on how American society should be structured. Hamilton believed society should be based around aristocracy, as it was in Britain, with the Whig party in particular being associated with aristocracy historically. In his September letter to Thomas Russell, Tone described aristocracy as “incompatible with the existence of genuine liberty”.⁵²² Aristocracy was not, as Montesquieu put it, in a rare defence of the English upper tier, an “intermediary power” which usefully held the monarch back from despotism.⁵²³ Jefferson's arguments against aristocracy were born of a belief that individuals should be given the opportunity to fulfil their potential and that this could not be achieved if an aristocracy were in place. This ‘enlightenment’, Jefferson hoped, would be achieved, for example, through universal education.⁵²⁴ Tone opposed aristocracy on the grounds that measures “of no less consequence than one including peace or war, the highest possible concern of a nation”, were being

⁵¹⁹ Jed W. Atkins, “Citizenship and Civic Virtue,” in *Roman Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 63–91.

⁵²⁰ Jerald A. Combs, “Hamilton, Washington, Adams, and Jay: Heroism Versus Respectability,” in *The Jay Treaty: Political Battleground of the Founding Fathers* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1970), 47–65; Joseph A. Murray, “Foreign Diplomacy,” in *Alexander Hamilton: America's Forgotten Founder* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2007), 193–219.

⁵²¹ See for example, on the debates about Britain and American trading and the rights of governments to dictate economic decisions for the wider good: Josiah Gee, *The Trade and Navigation of Great Britain Considered* (London: Sam. Buckley, 1729); John J. McCusker, “British Mercantilist Policies,” in *The Cambridge Economic History of the United States*, ed. Stanley L. Engerman and Robert E. Gallman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 337–63; Reinhard Schumacher, “Adam Smith's ‘Two Distinct Benefits’ from Trade: The Dead End of ‘Vent-for-Surplus’ Interpretations,” *History of Political Economy* 47, no. 4 (December 2015): 577–602.

⁵²² Tone, “Letter to Thomas Russell,” September 1, 1795, f. 3.

⁵²³ Montesquieu, *Montesquieu: The Spirit of the Laws*, 4.

⁵²⁴ Johann N. Neem, “‘To Diffuse Knowledge More Generally through the Mass of the People’ - Thomas Jefferson on Individual Freedom and the Distribution of Knowledge,” in *Light and Liberty: Thomas Jefferson and the Power of Knowledge*, ed. Robert M. S. McDonald (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012). Arthur Scherr, “Jefferson and Adams - ‘Natural Aristocracy,’ Class Conflict and the Uses of New England,” in *Thomas Jefferson's Image of New England: Nationalism Versus Sectionalism in the Young Republic* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2016).

determined solely by “the two upper Estates, manifestly against the sense of the great majority of the People”.⁵²⁵ Tone was therefore not only rejecting English rule, but the entire English model of society, dependent on an aristocracy and based around manufacture and trade.

While Jefferson’s republicanism was much more deeply rooted in his erudite study of philosophy, he and Tone held similar views on a number of topics, including their stance against debt.⁵²⁶ The controversy surrounding public debt was not limited to American politics, or even the development of new states. Elsewhere in Europe, the practice of borrowing to sustain heavy military spending was being brought into sharp focus.⁵²⁷ Not only were there significant economic ramifications of high debts, these fiscal policies were widely attacked as being unsustainable, potentially undermining the entire political structure, threatening the monarchy and prompting possible revolution. Hume, for example, had warned as far back as 1741 that “taxes may, in time, become altogether intolerable”, his biggest fear being that debt would eventually bring about the collapse of the existing British political system, which could potentially lead to tyranny.⁵²⁸ Democratic-republicans, most notably Jefferson and one of his most crucial party allies, Albert Gallatin, feared a high national debt would cause a disintegration of a number of republican values – it would encourage speculation, feeding inequality, and even allowing tyranny if its architects were not restricted by financial regulation.⁵²⁹ Tone’s own stance against debt was not explicitly based on its potential for eroding republican values, but was rather based on fears about the viability of credit. This was a major topic of discussion in the context of eighteenth-century conflicts in Britain and Ireland, which Tone draws on in the passage below.⁵³⁰ In another letter to Russell, written in October 1795, Tone indeed recalls how Pennsylvania’s anti-

⁵²⁵ Tone, “Letter to Thomas Russell,” September 1, 1795, f. 3.

⁵²⁶ Richard M. Salsman, “Classical Theories of Public Debt,” in *The Political Economy of Public Debt: Three Centuries of Theory and Evidence* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2017), 30–94; Herbert E. Sloan, “Wars, Debts, and Taxes,” in *Principle and Interest: Thomas Jefferson and the Problem of Debt* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2001), 86–125; Pangle, “The Framers’ Conception of Civic Virtue, and the Philosophical Contests Out of Which That Conception Emerges,” in *The Spirit of Modern Republicanism: The Moral Vision of the American Founders and the Philosophy of Locke*, 43–131.

⁵²⁷ Istvan Hont, *Wealth and Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. Michael Ignatieff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Istvan Hont, “The Rhapsody of Public Debt: David Hume and Voluntary State Bankruptcy,” in *Political Discourse in Early-Modern Britain*, ed. Nicholas Phillipson, Quentin Skinner, and James Tully (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Michael Sonenscher, “The Nation’s Debt and the Birth of the Modern Republic: The French Fiscal Deficit and the Politics of the Revolution of 1789,” *History of Political Thought* 18 (1997): 64–103; Michael Sonenscher, *Before the Deluge: Public Debt, Inequality, and the Intellectual Origins of the French Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

⁵²⁸ David Hume, “Of Civil Liberty (1741),” in *The Philosophical Works of David Hume* (Edinburgh: A. Black and W. Tait, 1826), 106.

⁵²⁹ Raymond Walters, “Spokesman of Frontier Democracy: 1790-1793,” in *Albert Gallatin: Jeffersonian Financier and Diplomat* (New York: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1957).

⁵³⁰ Hume led the discussions about Britain’s debt crisis, which had stemmed from financing wars. This is also discussed in: Istvan Hont, “The Rhapsody of Public Debt: David Hume and Voluntary State Bankruptcy,” 321–49.

British governor Thomas Mifflin, with whom he developed a friendship during his time in Philadelphia, had explained to him how the state operated on an anti-finance basis.⁵³¹ Tone writes:

Governor Mifflin (the General) told me that in a very short time the State would be able to pay all their expenses by the interest of the money which they were daily lodging in the Bank without drawing a dollar from the people. ... Then go and look at Ireland borrowing two million in one year, and for what? ... These are the things that make men republicans. These are the things, for which the lives of Thousands and Tens of Thousands are a cheap purchase.⁵³²

Tone makes an additional note in the same letter that the Pennsylvanian government had already “paid off the whole of the debt incurred in the acquisition of their independence” and, in spite of their commitment against taking on finance, there was “affluence and ease” in the state. On the surface, his latter comment would even appear to contradict republican values, specifically against luxury and corruption – ones which were at the core of the American revolutionary ideal. However, he utilises the argument to demonstrate that Ireland’s economic mismanagement could not be justified when there were examples of anti-finance governments operating much more effectively elsewhere. This passage also represents one of his first moves towards full democratic republicanism, suggesting the Irish people had the right to demand a new political system which did not require such borrowing.

Hamilton had planned for members of the aristocracy to help finance the government through bonds and declared that “a national debt, if it is not excessive, will be to us a national blessing”.⁵³³ Jefferson would go on to oppose this view publicly and over a number of years, perhaps best summarized by his comments, much later in 1816, that “the principle of spending money to be paid by posterity under the name of funding is but swindling futurity on a large scale”.⁵³⁴ It is clear where Tone stands on this issue in that he would not have been willing for Ireland to finance its independence via enormous debt, instead hoping to follow the model he found in Pennsylvania, where the state was able to prosper by its own means.

As has been acknowledged, there were a number of British, American and French sources from which Tone could have taken his views against debt. This was not the only danger of states’ commercial

⁵³¹ Wolfe Tone, “Letter from Tone to Thomas Russell,” October 25, 1795, MS 868/2/13-15, Trinity College Dublin.

⁵³² Ibid.

⁵³³ Alexander Hamilton, *The Works of Alexander Hamilton: Correspondence. 1769-1789*, ed. John C. Hamilton, vol. 1 (New York: John F. Trow, 1850), 257.

⁵³⁴ Thomas Jefferson, “Correspondence to John Taylor - May 28, 1816,” in *Jefferson: Political Writings*, ed. Joyce Oldham Appleby and Terence Ball (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 210.

systems either, as he also mirrored Jefferson's opposition to luxury, even if his ideas were not necessarily articulated in such clear republican rhetoric as the US statesman's. Jefferson's position was that virtue was hampered by commerce and in line with that, luxury. Similarly, the people Tone encountered in Philadelphia, he alleged, were a "disgusting race, eaten up with all the vice of commerce, and that vilest of all pride, the pride of the purse".⁵³⁵ Whereas Greaves used such utterances to suit his consistent portrayal of Tone as being keen to differentiate citizens by wealth and class, this poses a risk of attaching arguably anachronistic labels to his thinking.⁵³⁶ It appears more likely that he was informed by contemporary American discourse, much of which stemmed from Jefferson, about the corruptive influence of commerce. Although he had attacked luxury in his 1790 essay *On the State of Ireland in 1720*, this was specifically aimed at the landlord class in Ireland rather than the entire commercial system. It is therefore his experience in America that seems to have hardened these views.⁵³⁷

Through his diaries, Tone continued to discuss the economic policies of Washington's government. His entries during this period were largely focused on his day-to-day activities and were generally of little significance. Yet, on occasion, they are revealing. On February 6, he observes that "there is more difficulty in passing silver than paper... The republican silver is received with great suspicion".⁵³⁸ The 1792 Coinage Act and the introduction of the modern dollar had helped America to move from local, disconnected economies to one, national economy.⁵³⁹ However, its significance may also have resonated with Tone because of the symbolic importance of the coin. Britain had not allowed mints in the colonies and coins could not be exported from England. That is not to say that he would necessarily have been in favour of moves towards a centralised economy, as this contradicted many of his other principles against debt and installing a banking system that would emulate Britain in the way that Hamilton had hoped for.

Like Jefferson, Tone was concerned first and foremost with creating a virtuous society, his standpoints against commerce and national debt forming part of that vision. Jefferson's amalgamation of republican thought can be traced both to classical ideas, and to the revival of the republican tradition in England in the seventeenth century. Many of his views, such as those on religious tolerance, can also be traced back to Locke and the rest of the English dissenting tradition. Jefferson

⁵³⁵ Tone, "Letter from Tone to Thomas Russell," ff. 13-15.

⁵³⁶ Greaves states that "his works are full of class judgements": Greaves, *Theobald Wolfe Tone and the Irish Nation*, 15.

⁵³⁷ Wolfe Tone, "On the State of Ireland in 1720"

⁵³⁸ Wolfe Tone, "Diary Entries," February 2, 1796, Tone Papers, MS 2047, ff. 2-24, Trinity College Dublin.

⁵³⁹ Joshua McMorrow-Hernandez, *The United States Mint in Philadelphia* (Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing, 2018), 8; Michael Bordo and Finn E. Kydland, "The Gold Standard as a Commitment Mechanism," in *Modern Perspectives on the Gold Standard*, ed. Tamim Bayoumi, Barry Eichengreen, and Mark P. Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 71.

later denied in 1825 taking Locke's ideas and putting them straight into the 1776 *Declaration of Independence* – which he said was not “copied from any particular or previous writing”, but he did recognise the influence of the English republican tradition, admitting “all [the Declaration's] authority rests then on the harmonizing sentiments of the day, whether expressed in conversation, in letters, printed essays, or in the elementary books of public right, as Aristotle, Cicero, Locke, Sidney”.⁵⁴⁰ For Locke, religious toleration meant ceasing persecution of different Christian denominations – though focused on various strands of Protestantism, as expressed in his *Letter Concerning Religious Toleration*.⁵⁴¹

Both Jefferson and Madison argued for the freedom to exercise religion – and indeed the refusal to establish a state religion – in the constitution.⁵⁴² Jefferson planned to go further than Locke's relatively limited toleration, which appeared not to include Catholics. “It was a great thing to go so far,” he wrote of Locke in 1776, “but where he stopped short, we may go on”.⁵⁴³ While Tone was not above making judgements on religious groups where he found them – he told Russell the Quakers were “uncivil and uncouth” – he also asserted that the Pennsylvania government was “the best under heaven”.⁵⁴⁴ The government on which he was reporting came from a Quaker settlement formed in the 1680s, the appeal of which lay not only in their anti-finance position, but in their decision to centre their political philosophy on religious tolerance.⁵⁴⁵ The first amendment of the US constitution also held that “congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof”.⁵⁴⁶

The 1786 Virginia Act for Establishing Religious Freedom, authored by Jefferson, was equally clear about freedom of religion, but also the separation of church and state.⁵⁴⁷ Yet the very fact that there was relatively little said in the US constitution about religion meant the door was left open to interpretation and there were concerns, for example, that Quakers would be forced to participate in the military and could not conscientiously object. The Quakers were therefore keener to enshrine

⁵⁴⁰ Thomas Jefferson, “Letter to Henry Lee, Jr.,” May 8, 1825, The Thomas Jefferson Papers at the Library of Congress, General Correspondence 1651-1827, Microfilm: 055, U.S. Library of Congress, Washington DC.

⁵⁴¹ Locke, John. *A Letter Concerning Toleration and Other Writings*. Edited by Mark Goldie. (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2010).

⁵⁴² David A.J. Richards, *Toleration and the Constitution*, 1989, 111–17.

⁵⁴³ Julian P. Boyd, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), 548.

⁵⁴⁴ Tone, “Letter from Tone to Thomas Russell,” ff. 13-15.

⁵⁴⁵ Jerry William Frost, “The Creation of Religious Liberty in Early Pennsylvania,” in *A Perfect Freedom: Religious Liberty in Pennsylvania* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 10–29; Andrew R. Murphy, *William Penn: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 117–18; John A. Moretta, *William Penn and the Quaker Legacy* (New York: Pearson Longman, 2007), 75–85.

⁵⁴⁶ Grafton, *The Declaration of Independence and Other Great Documents of American History 1775-1865*, 25.

⁵⁴⁷ Thomas Jefferson, “An Act for Establishing Religious Freedom,” January 16, 1786, MS, Records of the General Assembly, Enrolled Bills, Record Group 78, Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

religious toleration as being fundamental to their constitution, fueled in part by experience of attacks on Churches and minority religions in Pennsylvania dating back a century.⁵⁴⁸ The US constitution was welcomed nevertheless by those in Pennsylvania keen on religious tolerance. Indeed, the *Pennsylvania Gazette* described all churches as enjoying “the most perfect religious liberty, free from the jealousy and oppression of an established church”.⁵⁴⁹ Yet the extent of Tone’s emphasis on religious freedom, and his description of Pennsylvania’s government as the “best under heaven” suggests his interpretation was closer to the Quaker constitution than the US one because of its more active steps towards ending religious persecution.

A distinction should be made between the United Irishmen’s anti-sectarian programme – which acknowledged the different denominations but aimed to bring them together – and Tone’s later aims of not classifying citizens by religion at all. Tone had, of course, already formulated some of his arguments on religious toleration in 1791, when he made his *Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland*.⁵⁵⁰ Then, throughout the 1790s and prior to his arrival in America, he had continued to campaign for Catholic rights and this may explain, to some extent, why he was drawn towards what he perceived to be a more cosmopolitan, universal Jeffersonian republicanism. Indeed, his time in America brought a shift towards wider religious toleration. In one of his attempts to flatter Adet, he commented the French Revolution had brought “the most perfect freedom to the exercise of all religion, at the same time, suggesting the necessity of abolishing all unjust distinctions and oppressive establishments”.⁵⁵¹ In reality, despite the recipient of his letter, what Tone referred to was closer to the American example. The French Revolution was by that stage interpreted by many, especially in Britain, as an anti-Catholic movement, characterized by iconoclasm, the Terror’s measures against Christian ‘cults’, and the sceptical Enlightenment’s criticisms of the Church.

Similarly, Hamilton’s Federalists viewed French republicanism more generally as a dangerous phenomenon as it spread around the globe.⁵⁵² Jefferson’s democratic-republicans, meanwhile, continued to support the French Revolution even in light of measures against freedom of religion. Tone was aware of this anti-French rhetoric that pervaded certain intellectual circles in both Britain

⁵⁴⁸ Ned Landsman, “The Episcopate, the British Union, and the Failure of Religious Settlement in Colonial British America,” in *The First Prejudice: Religious Tolerance and Intolerance in Early America*, ed. Chris Beneke and Christopher S. Grenda (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 75–97; William Pencak, “Jews and Anti-Semitism in Early Pennsylvania,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 126, no. 3 (July 1, 2002): 365–408.

⁵⁴⁹ John P. Kaminski et al., eds., “Pennsylvania Gazette - 16 July 1788,” in *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution* (Madison: University of Virginia Press, 2009).

⁵⁵⁰ Wolfe Tone, “An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland”

⁵⁵¹ Wolfe Tone, “Letter to Pierre-Auguste Adet, August 1795,” 15–16.

⁵⁵² John Chester Miller, “The Proclamation of Neutrality,” in *Alexander Hamilton and the Growth of the New Nation* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 1964), 363–79.

and America and in his letter of October 20, 1795 to United Irishman Arthur O'Connor, derided those who opposed "introducing a foreign enemy" in the form of French universalism.⁵⁵³ He points out that in the Glorious Revolution, "Whig noblemen and others brought a foreign army and a foreign prince into England in 1688," by welcoming William of Orange. There was also much to be said about Britain's own, more contemporary policies, especially surrounding Corsica, whose strategic placing in the Mediterranean placed it at the centre of a tug-of-war for maritime strength. It is with some irony he hails Britain's role in Corsica and its establishment of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom in 1794, as Britain had previously been reluctant to intervene on the island; the letter draws on Corsica as a popular cause of national independence in order to critique British foreign policy and justify French-backed revolution. "[Corsica] felt, we must suppose, the yoke of France intolerable," Tone recalled to O'Connor.⁵⁵⁴ "They applied, we are told, for the protection of England; and in consequence they introduced a foreign force into their own country to assist them in vindicating that liberty which they felt their own means inadequate to obtain." Opposition to France on the basis of its territorial empire was therefore unfounded, according to Tone.

The prevalence of Jeffersonian ideas in mid-1790s America informed Tone's time there, between the summer of 1795 and early 1796, in a number of ways. Overall, it consolidated his existing understanding of republican values such as virtue, fear of corruption, and good citizenship. This was predominantly through an emphasis on land labour and agrarianism, and a corresponding stance against high debt and commercialism. Jefferson helped to set a precedent in America for a republicanism that was pro-French, embodying the Revolution's principles of religious tolerance, arguably the element of Tone's own political thought for which he has become best known. While there were some notable differences between the basis of Tone's arguments and Jefferson's, particularly on their differing reasons behind their anti-debt stances, much of their wider thinking ran parallel. The latter had been instrumental in creating an intellectual environment in America in which Tone flourished.

Locke and Property

Jefferson played an active role in the foundation of the modern United States, but as has been established, many of the core principles which underlined America's constitution and early political programme originally had been inspired by Locke. This was particularly true in the area of property rights, which Locke believed were a stabilising factor in society.⁵⁵⁵ His *Two Treatises* had argued that

⁵⁵³ Tone, "Letter to Arthur O'Connor (MP for Philipstown, 1790-95), 20 October 1795," 285.

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁵ Joyce Oldham Appleby, "Locke, Liberalism, and the Natural Law of Money," in *Liberalism and Republicanism in the Historical Imagination* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1992), 58–

“the Supream [sic] Power cannot take from any Man any Part of his Property without his own consent”, and moreover, that “for the preservation of Property being the end of Government, and that for which Men enter into Society, it necessarily supposes and requires, that the people should have Property”.⁵⁵⁶ It was essential, therefore, that citizens could partake in society by means of owning property. Though Locke argued that in the state of nature, all men had equal access to the same resources, labour had the power to “annex” an individual to a particular resource at the expense of others.⁵⁵⁷

Part of the reason for Locke remaining such a central figure in the historiography of American political thought is his contribution to the development of the US as a commercial state, though Pocock has since questioned whether this element of American liberalism has been over-emphasised.⁵⁵⁸ Elliott, meanwhile, summarises the development of early American republicanism as a debate weighing up “the respective contributions of Lockean liberalism (the idea of responsible self-interest leading to social good)” and the classical model, “with its ethos of civic virtue, the good of the commonweal, restraint on private interests, and representative government”.⁵⁵⁹ Elliott contends that “the niceties of the debate need not concern us” in her biographical study, but the most prominent features of American republicanism are indeed of significance for the purpose of this research into how Tone’s ideas were shaped by US political theory.

While Tone arrived in Philadelphia without a concrete ideology on the matter, he soon started to show interest in the idea that the right to property would cement citizens’ ties to the state. In the earlier part of the decade, the United Irishmen had not seen economic development as a priority and as such, lacked a coherent economic plan. Even if their views as a Society ought not to be conflated with Tone’s entirely, this was a clear example of where they were in line with Tone’s ideas. The United Irish programme was lacking in economic detail partly because they did not want to be seen, in their own words, as “levellers”, putting the well-off at a disadvantage, even if this hampered their efforts to secure Catholic representation.⁵⁶⁰ The Leveller campaigns of the English Civil War era had centered

90; John Dunn, “The Politics of Locke in England and America in the Eighteenth Century,” in *John Locke: Problems and Perspectives: A Collection of New Essays*, ed. John W. Yolton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 45–81.

⁵⁵⁶ Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, 308.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid. 214.

⁵⁵⁸ J.G.A. Pocock, “Machiavelli, Harrington and English Political Ideologies in the Eighteenth Century,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 22, no. 4 (October 1965): 549–83. As an aside, Arneil suggests Locke’s arguments on property were used as a means of justifying dispossession of native American lands: Barbara Arneil, *John Locke and America: The Defence of English Colonialism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 2.

⁵⁵⁹ Elliott, *Wolfe Tone*, 269.

⁵⁶⁰ R.R. Madden, “Extracts from Address of Society of United Irishmen of Dublin, to the Irish Nation - January 27, 1793,” in *The United Irishmen, Their Lives and Times* (London: J. Madden & Company, 1843), 244.

on achieving property rights for tenants and workers who had cultivated their own land.⁵⁶¹ It is important first to track the development of Tone's views on property. In his earlier political life, he had not outwardly advocated land redistribution, but had certainly not stated opposition to it either, even when complaining about the Protestant domination of property. He alleged Ireland's Protestant minority were "implicitly devoted to England" because they were "so powerful by their property and influence".⁵⁶² The realities of Ireland's political and social landscape certainly leant themselves to Tone arguing against Protestant domination in terms of land ownership. He noted that "the Protestants, though not above the tenth of the population, were in possession of the whole of the government, and of five-sixths of the landed property of the nation."⁵⁶³ His first hints of the importance of property to citizens came in his *Sandwich Islands* proposals of 1788, but these ideas had remained under-developed and were not built on in his writings of the following years.⁵⁶⁴ His explicit views on land redistribution were therefore unclear.

By the time he was writing to Adet from Philadelphia in August 1795, Tone's criticism of "the rich in Ireland" had shifted substantially. He was no longer attacking their disproportionate land ownership, but rather the fact that they did not adhere to the requisite values that ought to follow.⁵⁶⁵ Property should have encouraged dedication to the state and self-sacrifice, but they would rather "sacrifice their own liberties and the independence of their country than endanger one shilling of their property in the event of a war". The question of whether property was a natural right, or whether it was something that could be given and taken away dependent on an individual's relationship with the state, dated back not only to Locke, but in fact to other elements of the English Civil War period too. Arguments about property and power had lived on in the writings of a number of prominent republicans, Harrington having deliberated on the links between the two, though he identified property as land, office, and commerce, not simply property.⁵⁶⁶

Considering his familiarity with the English radical tradition and, in particular, Locke, Tone would have been unlikely not to have formulated some kind of ideas on the subject. It is problematic to gauge the influence of Locke on Tone in this area by pointing to the one occasion where he cites him

⁵⁶¹ Thomas Allen Horne, "The Natural Right to Property: Grotius to Pufendorf," in *Property Rights and Poverty: Political Argument in Britain, 1605-1834* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 9–41; Andrew Sharp, Raymond Geuss, and Quentin Skinner, eds., *The English Levellers [Collection of Essays]* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁵⁶² Tone, *Life*, 44.

⁵⁶³ *Ibid.* 44–45.

⁵⁶⁴ Tone, Proposal Submitted to William Pitt for the Establishment of a Military Colony in the Sandwich Islands, f. 187.

⁵⁶⁵ Tone, "Letter to Pierre-Auguste Adet, August 1795," 15–16.

⁵⁶⁶ James Harrington, *Harrington: "The Commonwealth of Oceana" and "A System of Politics,"* ed. J.G.A. Pocock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

directly, as Smyth has done in *Wolfe Tone's Library*.⁵⁶⁷ However, his interest in property was particularly evident as he communicated his plans to the French Directory, for whom he wrote two *Memorials on the State of Ireland*. In the first, he related the situation of Ireland's Protestants, Catholics and Dissenters with the caution that they all needed to be considered "with regard to property, which is necessarily in some degree to explain the political situation of the country", an allusion to the plight of Irish Catholics.⁵⁶⁸ The second insists that upon landing, the French military should give a number of assurances so as not to be seen as a conquering power, including "a declaration of perfect security and protection of property to all who should demean themselves as good citizens and friends to the liberties of their country".⁵⁶⁹ Indeed, when looking back at that period retrospectively in April 1798, he suggested that land redistribution had never been part of the United Irishmen's plans. On accusations that the Society "go now for a distribution of property and an agrarian law," he responded: "I know not whether they do so now. I am sure in June 1795 when I was forced to leave the country, they entertained no such ideas."⁵⁷⁰

It is only from the point of Tone's exile in America and onwards that he began to actively voice opposition to the idea of an agrarian law, taking land from wealthier landowners and redistributing it to poorer citizens. While Elliott has portrayed Tone as moving away from Lockean ideas as his political thought progressed (and this may well be true on the tacit consent of Catholics to the political status quo in Ireland), the role Locke played in shaping his economic ideas as they emerged in the later years of his life should not be overlooked, both directly and indirectly through Jeffersonian republicanism.⁵⁷¹ It could be argued that this was because Lockean ideas were no longer at the forefront of political thought regarding tacit consent, but his economic ideas remained central in America and therefore had a considerable impact on Tone. Lockean individualism in America facilitated Tone's shift from a radical with no clear position on land redistribution, to a more archetypal ancient republican who placed increasing value on land ownership and property rights.

⁵⁶⁷ Smyth, "Wolfe Tone's Library: The United Irishmen and 'Enlightenment,'" 423–35.

⁵⁶⁸ Wolfe Tone, "First Memorial to the French Government on the Present State of Ireland," February 22, 1796, AF IV, carton 1671, ff 88-92, Archives Nationales.

⁵⁶⁹ Wolfe Tone, "Second Memorial to the French Government on the Present State of Ireland," February 29, 1796, AF IV, carton 1671, ff. 93-98, Archives Nationales.

⁵⁷⁰ Diary Entry for April 27, 1798 in: *The Writings of Theobald Wolfe Tone, 1763-98: France, the Rhine, Lough Swilly, and Death of Tone, January 1797 to November 1798*, vol. III, 246.

⁵⁷¹ Elliott, *Wolfe Tone*, 82, 159. Neal Wood, *John Locke and Agrarian Capitalism* (Chapel Hill: University of California Press, 1984). Jacqueline Stevens, "The Reasonableness of John Locke's Majority: Property Rights, Consent, and Resistance in the Second Treatise," *Political Theory* 24, no. 3 (August 1996): 423–63. Matthew H. Kramer, *John Locke and the Origins of Private Property: Philosophical Explorations of Individualism, Community, and Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

Conclusion

While scholars have highlighted the personal toll that exile took on Tone, this chapter has demonstrated that his time in America further honed his vision for Ireland, and that examining this period of his life provides valuable insight into his political ideas. The formation of the post-revolutionary American state in which Tone spent approximately seven months had been based on a number of republican principles borrowed from both ancient and modern sources. These ideas about citizen duty, property, and political representation were still prevalent in American 1790s discourse, with which Tone engaged via newspapers, republican publications such as pamphlets, correspondence, and through his personal contacts with other radicals.

Tone's writings in the period demonstrate that for him, Jefferson's vision of an agricultural, virtuous America was a near-perfect example of a post-revolutionary society. Contrary to Federalist plans to imitate the British Whig political and economic model, he saw America prospering because of the withdrawal of English influence. Federalists had hoped for a centralised bank to emulate the English system. Tone instead aligned himself with Jeffersonian principles in opposition to these financial and fiscal policies, which again places him as an advocate of classical aspirations for a virtuous republic, not a nation corrupted through commercial ventures.

This chapter represents the first attempt to analyse in depth the development of Tone's ideas in America. Aside from acknowledging that Tone's exile "soured his view of Americans, sharpened his sense of Irishness and anti-Englishness, and helped define his republicanism", Elliott's chapter on the subject does not delve into the specific political concepts he encountered while in the US.⁵⁷² Yet Tone's time in America thus demonstrates the value of taking his political ideas seriously, giving them due attention and unpicking what it was specifically about American political thought that appealed to him.⁵⁷³

Tone's writings in the period during, and shortly after, his exile also serve to demonstrate a number of parallels he drew between Irish Patriot arguments and those which had been used in the American revolution. On the issue of Catholic representation, he was informed firstly by the slogan of 'no taxation without representation' and secondly, by the concept of a people's army. These are two of his ideas which can be marked as having been formed during his time in America. As discussed in the

⁵⁷² Elliott, *Wolfe Tone*, 249.

⁵⁷³ Wilson also makes passing comments on how Tone was able to use his discoveries in America to his advantage, because "if the Irish in America appeared obnoxious, rude, and unruly, he argued, it was because the British government had made them that way". Wilson, "Hordes of Wild Irishmen," in *United Irishmen, United States: Immigrant Radicals in the Early Republic*, 36.

first two chapters, his earlier views on political representation were based on the symbolic meaning behind legislative independence. That is to say, for example, that in *Spanish War!* he opposed Ireland joining Britain's conflict as the Dublin parliament had not been consulted, rather than because of the taxation that would arise from the war. A 'people's army' was an obvious answer to this particular dilemma and while it did not exist in Britain or Ireland, he saw parallels with the militia movements in his native country. His exposure to American political thought also consolidated and hardened his stance on property rights, though indirectly and chiefly through the medium of English republican ideas, notably those of Locke. Tone's economic ideas, which have so often been dismissed as being virtually non-existent, only became a notable feature of his thinking at this time, as they came to resemble a combination of Jeffersonian and Lockean ideas.

It should not be forgotten that all these debates were happening in America at a time of heightened division due to the French Revolutionary wars. Tone's plans for France to aid a United Irish rebellion meant it was perhaps inevitable that he would lean towards the democratic-republicans, their support for universal rights and the spread of democracy, rather than Federalist support for Great Britain. Consequently, in February 1796, he left America for Paris to continue negotiations for an invasion in Ireland.

Chapter Four: Tone and France

Tone has commonly been associated with the ideas of the French Revolution, though often simply by implication as a leading United Irishman and Irish radical figure in the 1790s.⁵⁷⁴ So far, this thesis has argued against over-emphasising the impact of French political thought on his development at the expense of other strands of influence. In addition, while Tone's personal involvement in the Revolution has been well documented, detailed discussion of the nuances of his engagement with revolutionary ideas and interpretation of the Revolution has been sparse.⁵⁷⁵ This chapter will therefore offer the first in-depth examination of the extent to which Wolfe Tone's engagement with French affairs shaped his own political ideas.

Leaving the United States in February 1796, Tone arrived in Le Havre having travelled under a fake American passport.⁵⁷⁶ France, where he would remain until the first French expedition to Ireland in December of the same year, was by then under the rule of a five-man Directory. The government ruled under the jurisdiction of the Constitution of Year III (1795), which introduced a more conservative approach to backtrack on the violent excesses of Jacobin rule. The French state was by then also engaging in revolutionary wars with several European states in an attempt to spread republicanism through the continent via 'sister republics'.⁵⁷⁷ This included expansion into Dutch and Italian territories, as well as Switzerland and Austria, though many of these new republican 'states' did not generally last more than a few years.⁵⁷⁸ This strategy was to hold particular relevance for Ireland in the following months and years, as France would provide military support in the unsuccessful invasion of 1796 and in the later stages of the 1798 rebellion.

⁵⁷⁴ Richard Kearney, "The Irish Heritage of the French Revolution: The Rights of People and the Rights of Man," in *Ireland and France, A Bountiful Friendship: Literature, History, and Ideas: Essays in Honor of Patrick Raffroidi*, ed. Patrick Raffroidi, Barbara Hayley, and Christopher Murray (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 1992), 30–47. Marianne Elliott, "Ireland," in *Nationalism in the Age of the French Revolution*, ed. Otto Dann and John Dinwiddy (London: A & C Black, 1988), 71–87. Jim Smyth, "Introduction: The 1798 Rebellion in Its Eighteenth-Century Contexts," in *Revolution, Counter-Revolution and Union: Ireland in the 1790s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1–21.

⁵⁷⁵ Eamon O'Flaherty, "Irish Catholics and the French Revolution," in *Ireland and the French Revolution*, ed. Hugh Gough and David Dickson (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1990), 52–67; Smyth, "Wolfe Tone's Library: The United Irishmen and 'Enlightenment,'" 423–35; Small, *Political Thought in Ireland 1776–1798: Republicanism, Patriotism, and Radicalism*, 251; Elliott, *Wolfe Tone*, 236–71.

⁵⁷⁶ Tone, *Life*, 244.

⁵⁷⁷ On the early years of the Directory and its mission to spread republicanism and liberalism through its foreign policy, see: Andrew J.S. Jainchill, *Reimagining Politics after the Terror: The Republican Origins of French Liberalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 26–62, 141–197; Martyn Lyons, "Foreign Policy: Profit and Propaganda," in *France under the Directory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 204–209.

⁵⁷⁸ A timeline of the expansion into these sister republics can be found in: Joris Oddens et al., eds., *The Political Culture of the Sister Republics, 1794–1806: France, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Italy* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015), 9–15.

During his time as a political exile, Tone would also visit the Rhine and the Netherlands, eventually being joined by his wife Matilda and their children in Hamburg at the end of 1796 and subsequently returning to Paris in 1797. In the two years leading up to the 1798 rebellion, Tone's primary aim was securing French military assistance, in spite of the failure of an expedition in 1796, led by General Lazare Hoche (1768-1797).⁵⁷⁹ Day to day, he was attached to the *armée de Sambre-et-Meuse* and from late 1797, General Bonaparte's *armée d'Angleterre* as a staff officer. In alliance with Hoche, he also explored the possibility of sending a Dutch, or Batavian, force to Ireland, which resulted in another failed mission in June 1797.⁵⁸⁰

In spite of the recognised importance of his time in France, until recently few have attempted to dissect the idea that the French Revolution inspired Tone's own plans for rebellion. The impact of French ideas on Ireland, and indeed on Tone specifically, has been proclaimed without a wider discussion of where these ideas were first sourced from, paying little attention to the otherwise well-acknowledged links between eighteenth-century French discourse and classical republicanism.⁵⁸¹

In recent years, however, historiography has begun to move away from assuming a direct link between the French Revolution and Tone's ideas. Elliot and Smyth have both challenged this idea, arguing respectively that Tone disliked the "excesses" of the Revolution and that only its later stages had a notable impact on his ideas (but without unpicking which of Tone's ideas corresponded with the ideas of post-revolutionary France), and that the Irish Protestant Patriot tradition was "most formative" in the United Irish programme more generally.⁵⁸² This chapter seeks to build on that trend by providing an alternative explanation for Tone's political development, analysing the largely neglected area of his classical republicanism and how it should be weighed up against late eighteenth-century French ideas.

Tone's engagement with France will be assessed in three separate, but intrinsically linked, ways. Firstly, Tone's early ideas will be compared to some of the prominent theories which shaped French politics in the period. Though he rarely admitted to reading the texts of the *philosophes* – failing almost entirely to namecheck them in his diaries – that does not rule out the possibility that he may in

⁵⁷⁹ Hoche was one of the most prominent revolutionary generals and led a fleet to Ireland in 1796, only to be thwarted by poor organisation and weather conditions.

⁵⁸⁰ The name 'Batavian Republic' was used for the Dutch region between 1795-1806 following the takeover of the United Provinces by French revolutionary armies.

⁵⁸¹ Keith Baker, "Transformations of Classical Republicanism in Eighteenth-Century France," *The Journal of Modern History* 73, no. 1 (March 2001): 32–53; Marisa Linton, "The Derivation of Political Virtue - Classical Republicanism," in *Choosing Terror: Virtue, Friendship, and Authenticity in the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 34–37.

⁵⁸² Elliott, *Wolfe Tone*, 274; Smyth, "Wolfe Tone's Library: The United Irishmen and 'Enlightenment,'" 432.

fact have been familiar with them, either directly or indirectly.⁵⁸³ Secondly, consideration will be given to how from 1789 onwards, Tone responded to the specific events of the Revolution, particularly attacks on religion, property, and the wider move towards the Terror in 1793. Finally, his own time in France in 1796 will be examined to explore what impact this had upon his political development. Where a chronological approach has broadly been adopted in previous chapters, these three issues will be dealt with thematically in order to assess Tone's ongoing response to French issues throughout the 1790s, given their prominence in and implications for European politics.

In keeping with the methodological approach adopted so far in the thesis, the nature and extent of these various influences will be assessed through an analysis of Tone's writings. The authoritative English versions of Moody, McDowell and Woods, whose translations include detailed notes on the discrepancies between the originals and other copies, have been consulted.⁵⁸⁴ There are discussions of French politics to be found in Tone's 1791 pamphlet, *An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland*, his memoirs, in his correspondence with French government officials and generals from 1796 onwards, and in his addresses to the people of Ireland in November 1796.⁵⁸⁵ In the final section, his writings in Paris between the early part of 1796 to the end of 1797 will be analysed for changes in his political ideas.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore more comprehensively the impact of French political thought on Tone and whether it informed his own strand of republicanism. Many of Tone's writings emphasise virtue and the need for government which prioritises the common good, but it will be argued that his republicanism may be better compared to classical models. Although much of the rhetoric around the French Revolution was closely related to ancient republicanism, this chapter will argue that it was not necessarily through the former that he engaged with these ideas. It should not be overlooked that thinkers such as Rousseau and Montesquieu borrowed heavily from ancient republicanism, modernising the values of civic humanism and exploring the role of citizens in the state. Much of the overlap between Tone's ideas and those associated with the French Revolution

⁵⁸³ On authors citing influences in the eighteenth-century, see: Raymond Hickey, "Attitudes and Concerns in Eighteenth-Century English," in *Eighteenth-Century English: Ideology and Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1–21.

⁵⁸⁴ T.W Moody, R.B McDowell, and C.J Woods, eds., *The Writings of Theobald Wolfe Tone, 1763-98: America, France and Bantry Bay, August 1795 to December 1796*, vols. I-III

⁵⁸⁵ Tone, "An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland"; Tone, "First Memorial to the French Government on the Present State of Ireland," ff 88-92; Tone, "Second Memorial to the French Government on the Present State of Ireland," ff 93-98; Wolfe Tone, "Letter to Charles Delacroix," February 26, 1796, Tone papers, MS 2050, ff 1-2, Trinity College Dublin; Wolfe Tone, "To General Henri Jacques Guillaume Clarke," June 14, 1796, AF IV, carton 1671, f. 75, Archives Nationales; Wolfe Tone, "To the Militia of Ireland," December 22, 1796, Tone papers, MS 2050, f. 15, Trinity College Dublin; Wolfe Tone, "To the Irishmen Now Serving Aboard the British Navy," December 22, 1796, Tone papers, MS 2050, f. 15, Trinity College Dublin; Wolfe Tone, "To the People of Ireland," December 22, 1796, Tone papers, MS 2050, f. 15, Trinity College Dublin.

correspond to more generic civic republican values, which could have had several sources, including his early education on ancient societies and the seventeenth-century English republican tradition, both of which Tone has been shown to be familiar with in earlier chapters.

Eighteenth-century French Political Thought (pre-1789)

The connection between eighteenth-century French political ideas and the Revolution itself is a complex and much-disputed matter.⁵⁸⁶ From Tone's point of view, however, it is necessary to consider the widely-held contemporary perspective that the Revolution had been borne of the eighteenth-century sceptical Enlightenment.⁵⁸⁷ The constitutional crisis which had been building in the years leading to 1789 saw the legitimacy of absolute monarchy contested, opening the door to new debates about the merits of representative government. Gabriel Bonnot de Mably (1709-1785), and subsequently Rousseau, were path makers in bringing classical republican ideas to eighteenth-century France, extolling the concept of natural rights and emphasising the use of reason to address the constitutional questions facing France.⁵⁸⁸ Denis Diderot's *Encyclopédie* (1751-1772) had sought to compile the knowledge of such thinkers in an attempt to create a source from which societies might be persuaded to use reason, thereby questioning religious and governmental authority. If Tone did

⁵⁸⁶ The question of the link between Enlightenment-era ideas and the French revolution has been debated heavily, particularly with regard to its disintegration into state-led violence. On the latter, see: Linton, *Choosing Terror: Virtue, Friendship, and Authenticity in the French Revolution*, 1-16; Timothy Tackett, *The Coming of the Terror in the French Revolution* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2015), 13-39; Hugh Gough, *The Terror in the French Revolution* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 1-26; Sophie Wahnich, *In Defence of the Terror: Liberty or Death in the French Revolution* (London: Verso, 2012), 23-27, 79-97.

⁵⁸⁷ Jonathan Israel, *Revolutionary Ideas: An Intellectual History of the French Revolution from The Rights of Man to Robespierre*, 15-28; Daniel Roche, "The King and His Subjects," in *France in the Enlightenment* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998), 251-87; Robert Wokler, "The Enlightenment and the French Revolutionary Birth Pangs of Modernity," in *Rousseau, the Age of Enlightenment, and Their Legacies*, ed. Bryan Garsten (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 185-214; Baker, "Political Languages of the French Revolution," in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Political Thought*, 626-53; Keith Baker, "On the Problem of the Ideological Origins of the French Revolution," in *Inventing the French Revolution: Essays on French Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 12-31; Carol Blum, *Rousseau and the Republic of Virtue: The Languages of Politics in the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 15-17.

⁵⁸⁸ Julie Ferrand and Arnaud Orain, "Abbé de Mably on Commerce, Luxury, and 'Classical Republicanism,'" *Journal on the History of Economic Thought* 39, no. 2 (2017): 199-221; Johnson Kent Wright, "A Classical Republican in Eighteenth-Century France: The Political Thought of Mably" (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); Graeme Garrard, "Unsociable Man: Rousseau's Critique of Enlightenment Social Thought," in *Rousseau's Counter-Enlightenment: A Republican Critique of the Philosophes* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2012), 109-19; Merja Kylmäkoski, *The Virtue of the Citizen: Jean-Jacques Rousseau's Republicanism in the Eighteenth-Century French Context* (New York: P. Lang, 2001); Richard Dagger, *Civic Virtues: Rights, Citizenship, and Republican Liberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 81-89; Annelien de Dijn, "Political Thought in Eighteenth-Century France: The Invention of Aristocratic Liberalism," in *French Political Thought from Montesquieu to Tocqueville: Liberty in a Levelled Society?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 11-40; Johnson Kent Wright, "The Idea of a Republican Constitution in Old Régime France," in *Republicanism - A Shared European Heritage: Republicanism and Constitutionalism in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Martin van Gelderen and Quentin Skinner, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 289-93.

indeed accept this idea that the Revolution was a direct consequence of the ideas of Rousseau, Mably, and others, then this provides a valuable insight into his own understanding of the forces behind political change.

The classical influence:

Pre-revolutionary French republican discourse fused classical notions of duty to the state with eighteenth-century discussions of rights in unprecedented ways. Numerous French thinkers were inspired by classical republicanism. Consequently, these ideas had a considerable impact on the wider public imagination. For example, Fénelon's *Voyages de Télémaque*, a thinly-veiled attack on the perceived despotism of Louis XVI and his failure to govern virtuously, proved a best-seller and went on to inspire Rousseau.⁵⁸⁹ Montesquieu also argued against monarchical autocracy, basing his theories on classical concepts of honourable rule whereby the monarch reigned not motivated by self-interest, but in the wider interests of the people.⁵⁹⁰

Two of the most notable eighteenth-century writers who would harness these classical ideas and adapt them for contemporary France were Rousseau and Mably. Johnson Kent Wright's work on Mably is one of the most nuanced arguments which helps us to better understand the classical characteristics of eighteenth-century French ideas.⁵⁹¹ Rather than idealising about society in the manner of some writers in the Enlightenment era, at the heart of Rousseau and Mably's arguments was the idea that civilised human society was flawed and compared poorly to the state of nature.⁵⁹² The society Mably envisaged would operate most effectively in the absence of a gulf between different social classes. This was manifestly not the case in France, where luxury and wealth had corrupted this system.⁵⁹³ Both Rousseau and Mably therefore looked to ancient societies in order to explain how man could find fulfilment in the existing political system. As one example, Brent Cusher draws attention to the parallels between Rousseau's "art of persuasion" – focusing on how 'the people' could be convinced to obey legislation – and the same arguments of common good found in Plato's *Laws*.⁵⁹⁴ On this

⁵⁸⁹ François Fénelon, *Les Aventures de Télémaque* (1699), ed. Patrick Riley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

⁵⁹⁰ Brian C.J. Singer, "Montesquieu on Power: Beyond Checks and Balances," in *Montesquieu and His Legacy*, ed. Rebecca Kingston (New York: State University of New York Press, 2008), 97–113; Céline Spector, Christian Nadeau, and Daniel Weinstock, "Montesquieu: Critique of Republicanism?," in *Republicanism: History, Theory, Practice* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 38–54.

⁵⁹¹ Kent Wright, "A Classical Republican in Eighteenth-Century France: The Political Thought of Mably."

⁵⁹² Garrard, "Unsociable Man: Rousseau's Critique of Enlightenment Social Thought."

⁵⁹³ Rachel Hammersley, "A French Commonwealthman: The Abbé Mably," in *The English Republican Tradition and Eighteenth-Century France: Between the Ancients and the Moderns* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 86–97.

⁵⁹⁴ Brent Cusher, Geoffrey C. Kellow, and Neven Leddy, "A Master of the Art of Persuasion: Rousseau's Platonic Teaching on the Virtuous Legislator," in *On Civic Republicanism: Ancient Lessons for Global Politics*

point, Rousseau sourced Machiavellian ideas about how legislators used the concept of divine authority to cement citizens' dedication to the laws.⁵⁹⁵ The people's relationship with the law was pivotal because it was at the heart of what it meant to be a good citizen and bonded the individual to the state.

Meanwhile, Mably's *Entretiens de Phocion* (1763) had put forward the idea that citizens should be willing to fight to defend the nation, but that was only possible if they were not divided by class and subsequently, jealousy.⁵⁹⁶ Mably's text also advocated classical ideas about the merits of agrarian republics, something which Tone had become well-versed in during his time in America. The rhetoric of thinkers like Rousseau and Mably was then re-worked into prominent writings during the French Revolution and adapted to the 1780s political scene. For instance, in 1789, in arguably the Revolution's most influential text, Abbé Sieyès *Qu'est-ce que le Tiers-État?* (*What is the Third Estate?*) had reiterated that there should not be an entire class of people who had no stake in society and questioned the privileges of the first two estates.⁵⁹⁷ Sieyès' work called for a representative government by drawing on post-seventeenth century republican arguments against aristocracy which had gained popularity in England, but also by incorporating Rousseau's theory of the general will.⁵⁹⁸

Rousseau's concept of a 'general will', reflecting a common good, while corrupted in the later stages of the Revolution, was a novel republican take on seventeenth-century social contract theories and pioneered the notion of popular sovereignty.⁵⁹⁹ In re-defining the relationship between the laws and the people, Rousseau's 'general will' was compatible with both individual freedom and state legislation, because in an ideal society the latter would reflect the interests of the population. The Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen held that "the law is the expression of the general

(New York: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 226–45; Plato, *Plato's Laws: A Critical Guide*, ed. Christopher Bobonich (Cambridge University Press, 2010); Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "The Legislator," in *The Social Contract* (1762), ed. Tom Griffith, trans. H.J. Tozer (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1998), 40–43.

⁵⁹⁵ Maurizio Viroli, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the "Well-Ordered Society"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 209.

⁵⁹⁶ Mably's text was translated from a Greek manuscript and based upon supposed conversations between Phocion, a leader of Athens and Aristias and a young citizen. Gabriel Bonnot de Mably, *Phocion's Conversations: Or, the Relation Between Morality and Politics* (*Entretiens de Phocion: Sur Le Rapport de La Morale et de La Politique*, 1763), ed. William Macbean (London: Dodsley, 1769).

⁵⁹⁷ Abbé Sieyès, "What Is the Third Estate? (1789)," 92–163.

⁵⁹⁸ Rousseau's 'general will' is more effectively associated with direct democracy rather than representative government, but Sieyès' *What is the Third Estate?* modified this theory to fit a representative agenda.

⁵⁹⁹ James Conniff, "On the Obsolescence of the General Will: Rousseau, Madison, and the Evolution of Republican Political Thought," *The Western Political Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (March 1975): 32–58; Robert Wokler, "Rousseau and His Critics on the Fanciful Liberties We Have Lost," in *Rousseau and Liberty*, ed. Robert Wokler (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 189–213; Iseult Honohan, "Participation and Inclusion in the Extensive Republic: Rousseau, Wollstonecraft and Madison," in *Civic Republicanism* (London: Routledge, 2003), 77–111.

will”, a common good which would, at least in theory, reflect the wishes of all citizens.⁶⁰⁰ It represented one of the most clear-cut differences between modern French republicanism and its ancient predecessors, which instead focused on citizens’ duty to the state, rather than what they could expect in return. Under Maximilien Robespierre (1758-1794), who led the Committee of Public Safety which governed France between July 1793-July 1794, the idea of the general will also drove French republicanism away from the ancient model of society being shaped by a select, educated, and propertied few.

The democratic republicanism that characterized the most radical phases of the French Revolution therefore had deep roots in the eighteenth century, making it difficult to conclusively assign direct influence from the Revolution upon Tone’s own political ideas. It is also significant that many of his core republican values were already in place before 1789. His first *Sandwich Islands Memorandum* (1788) planned for a heavily militarised small republic, defended by its virtuous citizens.⁶⁰¹ This work is of added importance because there is very little in manuscript or in published form written by Tone before 1789, making the memorandum the best early example of a work articulating his political ideas. The republican rhetoric evident in the Sandwich Islands memorandum was again apparent in a speech of July 1, 1789, that Tone presented in his capacity as chairman of the Historical Society at Trinity College Dublin.⁶⁰² This speech provides one of his first references to ancient Roman traditions. When the practice of duelling was banned at the university - Tone himself having been involved in a duel where a student was killed – he remarked that “the temple of Janus was shut by common consent”.⁶⁰³ This was a reference to the Roman practice of opening the Temple during war and closing it at times of peace. Moreover, Tone also referred to famous debates from ancient Greek and Roman history, firstly by mentioning the orations of Athenian statesmen Demosthenes and Aeschines, and secondly by referencing Cicero and Antony. Thus, he summarised the personal attacks on pro-government MPs launched by Irish Patriots Henry Grattan and Henry Flood in their infamous debate on public spending that took place on 28 October 1783:⁶⁰⁴

⁶⁰⁰ Article VI, National Assembly of France, “Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen,” August 26, 1789, <http://www.hrcr.org/docs/frenchdec.html>.

⁶⁰¹ Tone, Proposal Submitted to William Pitt for the Establishment of a Military Colony in the Sandwich Islands, ff 254-259.

⁶⁰² Wolfe Tone, “Speech to the Historical Society of Trinity College, Dublin,” July 1, 1789, Journals of the Historical Society of Trinity College, vi, 135-41, Trinity College Dublin.

⁶⁰³ Tone, “Speech to the Historical Society of Trinity College, Dublin,” f. 139.

⁶⁰⁴ On Grattan and Flood in parliament, see: Siobhán Marie Kilfeather, *Dublin: A Cultural History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 65. O’Connell, *Irish Politics and Social Conflict in the Age of the American Revolution*, 315–40.

Let such look to the low scurrility of a Demosthenes against an Oschines [sic], the pitiful sarcasms of a Cicero against Antony, the contemptible ribaldry of Grattan against Flood, and see how those mighty geniuses fall into contempt and ridicule.⁶⁰⁵

Casting doubt on Tone's borrowing from not just the French Revolution, but what Israel has termed the "radical Enlightenment", is the fact that he never referred to Rousseau directly, either in the *Northern Star* or throughout his *Life* collection.⁶⁰⁶ Tone's borrowing of the ideas of previous political thinkers without attribution is a trend which can be found particularly in his writings of the early 1790s. Smyth points out that Tone's failure to cite Rousseau could partly be put down to his own desire for originality, and to better fit the narrative that his ideas were moulded by life experience. However, many of Tone's ideas, which on the surface could seem influenced by Rousseau's theory of direct democracy, correspond more closely with the similar, but distinct, Whig arguments on popular consent and representative democracy, which were prevalent in Britain and Ireland, as inspired by the seventeenth-century republican tradition of Locke, Harrington, Sidney, and Milton.⁶⁰⁷ By advocating a parliament that better reflected public opinion, Tone never explicitly called for the 'pure' democracy espoused by Rousseau, for instance, which argued for the people to shape policies directly, rather than by electing representatives and which would have handed power to the people directly. He believed, nevertheless, that the Irish parliament had failed to act on behalf of its people, writing in his 1790 *Review of the Conduct of Administration*:

It has been an old prejudice, which the experience of our own senses can subvert, that, to the existence of any Government, *some* integrity, *some* ability, and a great deal of popular opinion was necessary. We have lived to see an administration commence and proceed in an uninterrupted career of the most wanton extravagance, the most impudent prostitution, and the most gross and avowed corruption...in complete defiance of public censure, or public infamy.⁶⁰⁸

⁶⁰⁵ Tone, "Speech to the Historical Society of Trinity College, Dublin," f. 140.

⁶⁰⁶ Smyth, "Wolfe Tone's Library: The United Irishmen and 'Enlightenment,'" 424–25. On Israel's construction of the 'radical Enlightenment' concept, see: Jonathan I Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). The term 'radical Enlightenment' has attracted some criticism for covering too broad a time span, and for at times applying a niche interpretation of 'radical' ideology.

⁶⁰⁷ Blair Worden, "English Republicanism," in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought 1450-1700*, ed. Mark Goldie and J.H. Burns (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 443–76; Blair Worden, Gaby Mahlberg, and Wiemann, "Liberty for Export: 'Republicanism' in England, 1500-1800," 11–33; Phillip Pettit, "Three Core Ideas," in *On the People's Terms: A Republican Theory and Model of Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 5–8; Mark Goldie, "The English System of Liberty," in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Political Thought*, ed. Mark Goldie and Robert Wokler, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 40–79.

⁶⁰⁸ Wolfe Tone, "A Review of the Conduct of Administration during the Seventh Session of Parliament-Addressed to the Constitutional Electors and Free People of Ireland, on the Approaching Dissolution," 30–35.

As Tone's comments demonstrate, the Irish experience had shown that the Irish government did not fear public opinion and had been allowed to operate contrary to the public interest, a situation made possible by the corrupt nature of the representative system. He also criticised Irish MPs in the same text, arguing that their excesses, in this case regarding their pension allowances, had corrupted Ireland's "public virtue and national integrity" and had demoralised the people to such an extent that "the measures of Administration went but to undermine the Constitution, and to sap the virtue of the people".⁶⁰⁹

It is indisputable that elements of Tone's political ideas bore similarities with French democratic republicanism. However, this section has suggested that these common elements could have arisen from a number of sources pre-dating the Revolution, his views based on the importance of popular opinion. Further to this, and as previous chapters have demonstrated, his ideas on popular consent had already been founded upon Whig or Lockean philosophy about representative democracy.

A disciple of French universalism and popular sovereignty?

As we have seen, Tone's views on democracy and popular consent were not particularly likely to have been inspired by France. His anti-sectarianism will now be discussed, as this is another area which warrants discussion because of its apparent similarities to French universalism and individual rights. His views on Catholic rights were also linked to his understanding of popular sovereignty in Ireland. In his *Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland* (1791), he had reiterated these views, which were based on an ancient republican understanding of "liberty", of actively participating in government – espoused in seventeenth-century English republicanism - rather than the eighteenth-century French interpretation of the term as freedom from tyranny.⁶¹⁰ On the accusation that Irish Catholics were not sufficiently educated or informed enough to enjoy political representation, the pamphlet responds:

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid. 35.

⁶¹⁰ Goldsmith, "Liberty, Virtue, and the Rule of Law 1689-1770," 197–233; Jed W. Atkins, "Liberty and Related Concepts," in *Roman Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 37–63; Peter Liddel, "Rawls on Liberty, Duty, and Obligation: Models in the Study of Ancient Concepts," in *Civic Obligation and Individual Liberty in Ancient Athens* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 37–72; Mortimer N.S. Sellers, "The Origins of Republican Liberty," in *The Sacred Fire of Liberty: Republicanism, Liberalism and the Law* (Basingstoke: Springer, 1998), 6–41.

Were the Polish nation prepared for liberty, when it was planted in one day? Were the French prepared for liberty? Yes, I shall be told, the Gentry were; and I answer, so are the Catholic Gentlemen of Ireland.⁶¹¹

Irish Catholics, therefore, needed to be actively involved in shaping society. Tone mentions specifically “Catholic Gentlemen” - those of higher social and economic standing - as those who were ready for political representation.⁶¹² As found in ancient republican societies, these Catholics would already have a stake in society and should be permitted to take action towards maintaining those interests. Though this echoed Whig discourse in Britain, it would appear to contradict moves towards universal democracy in France, which were based on the argument that the people needed to be granted suffrage first and would then become equipped to make use of it later. Sieyès, for instance, justified democracy on a very different basis, stating that regardless of education or ‘readiness’ for liberty, ‘the people’ had an inalienable right to govern themselves because they *were* the nation.⁶¹³ Thus, Tone’s arguments for political representation, based on the idea that more prominent members of society should be able to vote, demonstrate once again that while his views on Catholic rights might on the surface seem to have echoed the universalism of the French Revolution, there were clear differences. Whereas Rousseau’s concept of natural rights applied to the people as a whole and was unaffected by class, Tone’s ideas corresponded more closely with the ancient republican system, rather than its renewal in eighteenth-century France.

Another reason to question Tone’s borrowing from French republicanism is the relevance of other sources for his views on popular sovereignty. In Ireland, for instance, ideas about direct democracy had been growing in popularity amongst more radical reformers such as the United Irishmen since the early 1790s, not least because of the limited impact of measures to reform the representative system to date. While reformers continued to persist with these campaigns, the shortcomings of 1782 - which had supposedly been a watershed moment for the Dublin parliament in terms of limiting the influence of the British government and preventing corruption - were enough to convince Tone that the avenue of re-shaping the existing constitutional framework had been exhausted. Thus, the political system needed a much more significant overhaul. Many republicans throughout Europe were at this time, before the idea of a ‘general will’ had properly taken hold in the French Revolution, still aiming to secure a more successful form of representative democracy, similar to the British model which was upheld as an example. It is telling that of all Rousseau’s works, Kennedy notes that it was his novel, *La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761), with its underlying commentary on individual morals, which sold

⁶¹¹ Tone, “An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland,” 21.

⁶¹² In France, non-Catholics had been awarded increased rights from 1787 onwards.

⁶¹³ Sieyès, “What Is the Third Estate?” 98.

particularly well in Ireland, rather than his more overt political texts, which may indicate that those texts may not have yet had such a profound impact.⁶¹⁴ His *Emile*, which presented how man could be educated to avoid corruption and maintain himself in his ‘natural’ state, also proved popular in Ireland.⁶¹⁵

Tone himself believed that the change in Irish public opinion towards increased Catholic political rights was not down to the works of famous political theorists. It could instead be attributed to the work of the General Committee of the Catholics, of which he was a key member, along with his friend John Keogh, who had risen the people from their “apathy”.⁶¹⁶ There was a “new spirit gradually arising” thanks to the prospect of new reforms, Catholic relief measures having brought the majority population in Ireland closer to being ready for liberty. Throughout his writings, reform is a major reference point and he makes no suggestion at all that such advancements for Catholics in Ireland were coming from a vaguer “progress of the human mind”, as it had been termed by the French philosopher Condorcet in the mid-eighteenth century in the context of increased political representation for the people.⁶¹⁷ This represented a fundamental difference in Tone’s thinking between tangible reform, which had presented Catholics with new opportunities, and the concept of progress found in the French Enlightenment. The latter was also discussed in Britain, for example by the Scottish Whig philosopher John Millar, who emphasised the moral implications of government and argued their role was to protect their citizens, and that the French Revolution would therefore serve as an intellectual breakthrough in the collective human consciousness.⁶¹⁸ Though Tone did not explicitly refute such an idea, when he was writing in 1796 it is clear that he did not share this faith in the general progress of knowledge. That situates him away from the discourse of mainstream reformers and situates his political thought better in its own context, rather than seeing him as a typical product of the Enlightenment era.

Although he did not necessarily believe in the wider progress of human society, he did believe that the General Committee had, by agitating on behalf of Catholics, brought about an eagerness for political

⁶¹⁴ Kennedy, *French Books in Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, 139; Robert Darnton, “Readers Respond to Rousseau: The Fabrication of Romantic Sensitivity,” in *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), 215–57.

⁶¹⁵ Kennedy, *French Books in Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, 124.

⁶¹⁶ Tone, *Life*, 48. This comes from the ‘*Life of Theobald Wolfe Tone – Previous to his Mission to France*’ passage of his memoirs written in August 1796.

⁶¹⁷ Antoine-Nicholas de Condorcet, *Outlines of an Historical View of the Progress of the Human Mind* (London: J. Johnson, 1795), 13–21.

⁶¹⁸ Bob Harris, *The Scottish People and the French Revolution* (London: Routledge, 2015), 25–30; Anna Plassart, “Scotland’s Political Debate: The Scottish Reception of the French Revolution,” in *The Scottish Enlightenment and the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 48–55.

change among the people.⁶¹⁹ Among their many causes, the General Committee fought against certain taxes and fines, such as tithes being levied against Catholics and fines for missing Protestant church services. However, in spite of Catholics serving as the majority population in Ireland, Tone did not group them as a ‘third estate’. Rather than thinking in these terms, Tone believed this demand for change stemmed from the “commercial interest, rising in wealth and power”, seeing Ireland’s merchant classes, and the middle classes of which he himself was one, as the key to challenging the upper estates.⁶²⁰ This serves as further evidence of his practical nature. During his time in America, he had opposed commercialism on the basis that it had the potential to corrupt citizen virtue and prove a danger to the state itself by encouraging commercial rivalries with other nations. However, these later writings suggest he did see the potential of utilising the increasing influence of Ireland’s middle classes. Hence, his only outright mention of a “third estate” came in the context of a discussion about popular grievances, with Catholics carrying so much of the burden. He wrote in 1792:

In fact, the downfall of feudal tyranny was acted in little on the theatre of the General Committee. The influence of their clergy and of their barons was gradually undermined, and the third estate, the commercial interest, rising in wealth and power, was preparing by degrees to throw off the yoke, in the imposing, or, at least, the continuing of which the leaders of the body, I mean the prelates and aristocracy, to their disgrace be it spoken, were ready to concur.⁶²¹

While in his earlier writings, in which he called for increased political representation for the masses, Tone spoke in terms of an abstract ‘people’, here he does not characterise the collective as a coherent unit. His understanding of the Irish people was therefore not based on similar rhetoric as the political thought preceding the French Revolution.

While the spread of French ideas about popular sovereignty and social contract theory was a contributing factor in the rise of a revolutionary culture in Ireland, as it was elsewhere in Europe, there is insufficient evidence that Tone’s political thought was shaped by this trend. The overlap between Tone’s ideas and eighteenth-century French republican discourse corresponded to wider ancient republican values, which could have been taken from a number of places, especially given his earlier relationship with the English Whigs. His writings provide little direct engagement with the *philosophes*. It is, of course, possible that their influence was indirect, or that Tone was unconsciously

⁶¹⁹ It should also be noted that in 1793, the General Committee recorded a payment to Tone of £1534 2s 6d for his work as ‘agent to the Committee’. *“Proceedings of the General Committee of the Catholics of Ireland Which Met on Tuesday, April 16, and Finally Dissolved on Thursday, April 25, 1793”* (Dublin: H. Fitzpatrick, 1793).

⁶²⁰ Tone, *Life*, 48.

⁶²¹ *Ibid.*

borrowing their ideas. Smyth has acknowledged this point in his article, “Wolfe Tone’s Library”, but he does so through an analysis of who Tone cites, rather than by studying his ideas or searching for parallels in his political thought with notable French thinkers.⁶²² In fact, some of his ideas, notably that democracy should be awarded to those with property and wealth, were incongruous with those which would gain traction in the French Revolution, and particularly with Rousseau’s theorization of popular sovereignty. Thus, what may appear at first glance to be a French influence may be described more accurately as a combined impact of English seventeenth-century and ancient republican values, reworked for the Irish context, and honed by his time in France where classical concepts of virtue and militarism were also experiencing an eighteenth-century revival.

Tone’s response to the French Revolution (1789-1796)

This section will consider Tone’s responses to the Revolution, from its starting point in 1790 until he travelled to France in 1796. In the wake of the Estates-General in 1789, revolutionary fervour had come to a head with the Storming of the Bastille in the July. Meanwhile, in the countryside, peasants were revolting against their landlords in a period of agrarian agitation which has been characterised as ‘The Great Fear’. Louis XVI was increasingly marginalised in the following years and attempted to flee Paris in 1791 as France moved towards a constitutional monarchy, until the institution was abolished altogether in September 1792. France’s last king was then executed in January 1793. While the exact dates of the Reign of Terror against those suspected of disloyalty to the state, led by Robespierre’s Committee of Public Safety, have been contested, it can be categorised into an approximate timespan between the autumn of 1793 and the summer of 1794. By November 1795, the ‘First Republic’ was replaced by the Directory and despite maintaining an adventurous revolutionary foreign policy, this fourth post-revolutionary Government saw a return to more conservative measures. This came in the wake of the Thermidorian Reaction (July 27, 1794), when Robespierre was removed from power, as the Directory tried to curb the violent excesses of their Jacobin predecessors.

Even in the British and Irish political circles that had welcomed the Revolution, many of these events proved controversial. Among the moderate Whigs, the Revolution’s popularity was largely shattered by the Reign of Terror.⁶²³ Tone’s writings show him to have been familiar with the varying policies of each of the different revolutionary governments, a constitutional monarchy, a National Convention,

⁶²² Smyth also presents a very different case by arguing that Irish Patriot writers were the most significant influence on Tone, rather than the classical ideas presented here. Smyth, “Wolfe Tone’s Library: The United Irishmen and ‘Enlightenment.’”

⁶²³ Frank O’Gorman, *The Whig Party and the French Revolution* (London: Macmillan, 1967), 132–34; Mitchell, *Charles James Fox and the Disintegration of the Whig Party, 1782-1794*, 234–39.

and the Directory all enjoying power during the period discussed. The event of the Revolution itself should not be underestimated as a cause for pushing Tone towards his later political programme, even if that was only a consequence of its divisive nature, splitting Europe into defenders of the monarchy and conversely, republicans. The French system thus became a model for republicans to aspire towards. Yet its appeal, for Tone, ultimately lay not in the finer details of the radical Enlightenment, taking little from French political thought, but in the transferring of political power to the people and as such, his responses to a number of issues will be discussed: France's treatment of the monarchy, attacks on religious belief and on the Church, and the Revolution's violent descent after 1793. As we will see, he took very little from the Revolution in terms of specific ideas, subscribing only to a wider republican outlook as popularised in France.

On constitutional monarchy:

To begin with, Tone's reaction to the move away from absolute monarchy towards a British style-constitutional monarchy followed mainstream political trends in both Britain and Ireland. Many Irish Patriots were in favour of the supposed ideals of the Revolution, while remaining relatively sympathetic to the monarchy of Louis XVI. He had been seen to play an active role in encouraging American independence, which Irish Patriots welcomed.⁶²⁴ They had not yet given up hope that his would be a monarchy bringing progress, especially in the area of increased toleration towards Protestants, but at the same time, they were encouraged by the notion that the people were finally gaining adequate political representation and absolutism was being challenged. Similarly, in the wake of the Glorious Revolution, many who were arguing for the Patriot cause in Ireland had supported the newly established relationship between the Crown and Parliament.

When discussing the Revolution "twelve-month in its progress" in his diaries, Tone acknowledged that initially, "everyone was in its favour; but after some time the probable consequences to monarchy and aristocracy began to be foreseen and the partisans of both to retrench considerably in their admiration".⁶²⁵ In referring to "partisans of both", Tone notes the respective support of the monarchy and aristocracy from British Tories and Whigs, between whom there had been division over the prospect of revolution on the continent. Between 1790-91, the political consensus that began to emerge was not about withdrawing power from the nobility and monarchy altogether. Instead, it was shaped by Girondin rhetoric, and indeed the similar arguments of many Whigs in Britain, about the merits of constitutional monarchy. In the same way that the Glorious Revolution changed how the

⁶²⁴ Derek Jarrett, *The Begetters of Revolution: England's Involvement with France, 1759-1789* (London: Longman Group, 1973), 215.

⁶²⁵ Tone, *Life*, 43.

Crown and the British parliament operated alongside one another, Tone believed that the French Revolution had strengthened the appetite for parliamentary reform, noting that previously, “he was looked on as extravagant who thought of a Parliamentary reform”. The new landscape now allowed for more serious discussion about political change.

In the same passage, Tone adopted the often-voiced narrative by French revolutionaries on their motives for limiting the king’s power. Many looked to thinkers like Montesquieu, who had argued long before the Revolution that France was fighting against “a despotism rooted in fourteen centuries,” so that “the eyes of every man in every quarter [of Europe] were turned anxiously on the French National Assembly”.⁶²⁶ Tone perceived the National Assembly, and its representative government, as a necessary curb on despotism, in contrast to the narrative being promoted in Britain by Edmund Burke. While Burke was arguing that the monarchy took their legitimacy from their long-established and historical presence, Tone believed rulers could only achieve legitimacy by governing in the interests of the people, not by the weight of history and tradition alone.

Attacks on the church:

In Ireland, meanwhile, some of the opposition towards events in France came not from a fear of the implications for aristocracy or monarchy, as was the case in Britain, but from animosity towards the attacks on the Catholic religion. Such attacks had started to gain momentum under the Legislative Assembly from late 1791 onwards and they were both material, in terms of the smashing of bells and iconoclasm, and symbolic, with legislation such as the introduction of divorce contradicting Catholic doctrine.⁶²⁷ Anti-religious measures were at their height between 1793-4 and stretched from confiscating Church land and taking away the Catholic Church’s power to impose taxes, to the executions of priests.⁶²⁸ At least from Britain, it appeared as though these events were being

⁶²⁶ Montesquieu had defined despotic monarchic government as where “one alone, without law and without rule, draws everything along by his will and his caprices”. - Montesquieu, *Montesquieu: The Spirit of the Laws*, 10.

⁶²⁷ Eamon O’Flaherty, “Irish Catholics and the French Revolution,” in *Ireland and the French Revolution*, ed. Hugh Gough and David Dickson, 52–67; Thomas Bartlett, “Religious Rivalries in France and Ireland in the Age of the French Revolution,” *Eighteenth-Century Ireland* 6 (January 1, 1991): 57–76; John Hall Stewart, “Poetry on the French Revolution in the Irish Press,” *Historian* 24, no. 2 (February 1962): 172–91. In Britain, Burke was among the most vocal opponents of de-Christianisation and feared the removal of state religion was one step towards the breakdown of wider authority: Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. On British attitudes towards attacks on religion which had taken place in France, also see: Robert Hole, “English Sermons and Tracts as Media of Debate,” in *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics*, ed. Mark Philp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 18–37; Kirsty Carpenter, “Secularization by Stealth? Emigres in Britain during the French Revolution,” in *The French Revolution and Religion in Global Perspective: Freedom and Faith*, ed. Bryan A. Banks and Erica Johnson (New York: Springer, 2017), 73–95.

⁶²⁸ Nigel Aston, “The Impact of the Revolution on Religious Life and Practice, c. 1793-1802,” in *Christianity and Revolutionary Europe, 1750-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 211–26; Nigel Aston, *Religion and Revolution in France, 1780-1804* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2000);

motivated by the eighteenth-century rationalist ideas which were pervading France. In contrast, Tone's views were not anti-religious, and he never specifically promoted rational religion, or indeed anti-religious rationalist ideas.⁶²⁹

The first significant French Revolutionary attacks on Church power had begun in 1789, influenced by the juxtaposition of rationalist philosophy with Catholic dogma which had dated back to the radical Enlightenment.⁶³⁰ The newly-founded Constituent Assembly set the tone with the Decree of 2 November 1789 when, seeking to re-balance France's troubled economy, they placed Church property in the hands of the nation.⁶³¹ After all, no such protection had been afforded to the Church by the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen in August of the same year.⁶³² Anti-religious measures included attacks on individual churches – partly in order to search for weapons to ensure priests were not aiding 'enemies of the people' – and the wider prohibition of public Christian worship. In 1791, Tone reacted specifically to France's anti-clericalism in *An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland*, noting "it is not six months since the Pope was publicly burned in effigy at Paris, the capital of that Monarch, who is stiled the eldest son of the church".⁶³³ In such a hostile climate, he understood the perceived "danger to the church establishment", which fed fears that ordinary Catholics could not be loyal to the government and the Church at the same time.⁶³⁴ Anti-papal oaths were one measure aimed at dealing with this dilemma facing ordinary parishioners. Perhaps it was an inevitable consequence that these fears were also felt by the Catholic Church in Ireland, who felt the need to condemn the 1798 rebellion to demonstrate their willingness to work alongside the parliament.⁶³⁵ They continued thereafter to promote loyalty to the government.

Roger Chartier, "Dechristianization and Secularization," in *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991).

⁶²⁹ Indeed, this battle to overcome Catholic dogmas with reason was not restricted to France, also found in the writings of the German thinker Hermann Samuel Reimarus, but was particularly notable in the works of French natural philosopher Émilie du Châtelet and, of course, Voltaire, who took much of his emphasis on reason from Locke. Bertram Eugene Schwarzbach, "Reason and the Bible in the So-Called Age of Reason," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 74, no. 3 (September 2011): 437–70.

⁶³⁰ On the de-christianization of France from 1789 onwards, see: Charles A. Gliozzo, "The Philosophes and Religion: Intellectual Origins of the Dechristianization Movement in the French Revolution," *Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture* 40, no. 3 (1971): 273–83; Dale K. Van Kley, "Christianity as Casualty and Chrysalis of Modernity: The Problem of Dechristianization in the French Revolution," *The American Historical Review* 108, no. 4 (October 2003): 1081–1104; Steven Englund, "Church and State in France since the Revolution," *A Journal of Church and State* 34, no. 2 (Spring 1992): 325–61.

⁶³¹ Francis Messner, "Public Funding of Faiths According to Local Law in Alsace-Moselle," in *Public Funding of Religions in Europe* (New York and London: Routledge, 2016), 85.

⁶³² National Assembly of France, "Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen," August 26, 1789, <http://www.hrcr.org/docs/frenchdec.html>.

⁶³³ Tone, "An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland," 22.

⁶³⁴ Tone, 17.

⁶³⁵ John P. Greene, *Between Damnation and Starvation: Priests and Merchants in Newfoundland Politics, 1745–1855* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 2001), 30; Alan Ford, "'Firm Catholics' or 'Loyal Subjects'? Religious and Political Allegiance in Early Seventeenth-Century Ireland," in *Political Discourse in Seventeenth- and*

In contrast to French revolutionaries, Tone argued for religious toleration, as previously discussed when he came into contact with the Quaker tradition in Pennsylvania, where he was in exile between 1795 and 1796.⁶³⁶ Closer to home too, radicals had argued for increased toleration towards Dissenters. In his *First Memorial to the French Government on the Present State of Ireland* (February 1796), he described Irish Dissenters as “from the genius of their religion and the spirit of enquiry which it produces, sincere and enlightened republicans”.⁶³⁷ In doing so, he was grouping together a variety of denominations separate from the Church of Ireland including Baptists, Quakers, Methodists, Congregationalists and even Presbyterians. Dissenters had been targeted by the penal laws, albeit not to the same extent as Catholics, and there were a number of restrictions on them.⁶³⁸ While landowning Dissenters could vote and hold office if they met the property requirements, they did not enjoy full political or civil rights. For example, they were unable to sit on town councils and their marriages were not legally recognised. They could serve in the military, but they were prevented from occupying the most senior roles. Resentment also grew out of the paying of tithes to the Church of Ireland. They encountered practical difficulties too; with the majority of Presbyterian Dissenters living as tenant farmers, without references from their clergy they were unable to move around.

The majority of Irish Dissenters would have, in fact, not viewed Tone’s description of “enlightened republicans” as a positive thing, seeing as it undermined their arguments, which they had made for the preceding century, that religious dissension was not akin to political rebellion. That position had changed somewhat by the time of Tone’s writing, in the wake of Dissenting support for the American and French revolutions, but it is noteworthy nonetheless that Tone attempts to use them to portray the Irish to the Directory as an “enlightened” people ready to receive assistance.⁶³⁹ While Presbyterians were arguably less ostracised in terms of their standing due to the position their Church enjoyed in Scotland, where their religion was recognised, Tone still chooses to position them alongside other Dissenters. By grouping all these various denominations in together, he was able to explain and justify to the Directory his previous acts on behalf of persecuted religions in Ireland, when this was so opposed to the current French government’s example towards religious groups.

Eighteenth-Century Ireland, ed. D.G Boyce, R Eccleshall, and V Geoghegan (Basingstoke: Springer, 2001), 1–32.

⁶³⁶ Tone discusses the Quakers in: Tone, “Letter from Tone to Thomas Russell,” October 25, 1795

⁶³⁷ Tone, “First Memorial to the French Government on the Present State of Ireland.”

⁶³⁸ Ian McBride, “Eighteenth-Century Ireland,” in *Scripture Politics: Ulster Presbyterians and Irish Radicalism in the Late Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 14–41; Dennis L. Dworkin, “Introduction,” in *Ireland and Britain, 1798–1922: An Anthology of Sources* (New York: Hackett Publishing Company, 2012), x–xxviii.

⁶³⁹ Andrew R. Holmes, “Protestant Dissent in Ireland,” in *The Oxford History of Protestant Dissenting Traditions*, ed. Andrew Thompson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 119–38.

The treatment of religion had divided the Directory, some elements having been concerned that Jacobin oppression of Churches had damaged France. Thus, their official policy was to adopt a more moderate attitude, especially with a view to granting Catholic concessions to quash royalist unrest. That is not to say, though, that attacks on religion ceased, with a clampdown on religious observation on Sundays following their ascent to power. What is more, the Directory moved instead towards Theophilanthropism, a cult which accepted the existence of a deity while at the same time focusing chiefly on virtue. The movement eventually aimed at replacing Christianity. Perhaps on account of his own conflicted religious background, Tone did not appear to favour one universal truth, hence his openness to different religious denominations, as well as other belief systems which emphasised reason. Indeed, this may have been a by-product of his own Protestant upbringing.

At least in his letters to the Directory, Tone appeared to support the seizure of Church lands, which raises further questions about his views not only on religion but also on property. The latter was honed by his reading of Locke and his time in America. It was perfectly plausible for him to share grievances about the disproportionate wealth of the Church without supporting seizure of its lands.⁶⁴⁰ This is particularly true if his views against the redistribution of property were based on the Lockean idea that property was an instrument of social stability. Tone seeks to give the impression to the French government officials to whom he is writing, that he would emulate confiscating Church of Ireland property. When assessing the country's revenue in the aftermath of a potential revolution, he cites "church, college, and chapter lands".⁶⁴¹ That he is making these claims in his *Second Memorial to the French Government* does reinforce the idea that this programme of property confiscation was distinctly French. The context of these claims must however be highlighted: Tone was very aware that these claims would have appealed to the Directory, whose support he was seeking. These statements would also have had the benefit of convincing the French government that Ireland would be financially solvent and possessed the resources to manage itself post-independence and must therefore be considered with caution. Perhaps more in line with his own political ideas and agenda,, Tone also includes in these measures "the property of absentees who never visit the country at all", not only drawing on the grievances against absentee landholders in Ireland, but further reiterating that property rights were reserved for good citizens. Thus, "the property of Englishmen in Ireland" was at risk too, and it was to be "confiscated and applied to the discharge of the obligations incurred in the acquisition of the independence of Ireland".⁶⁴² Intriguingly, Robespierre himself had spoken out against similar issues:

⁶⁴⁰ Chapter Five will discuss his views on the "tyranny" of the papacy as found in: Wolfe Tone, "Diary Entry," March 1, 1798, Tone Papers, MS 2049, f. 297, Trinity College Dublin.

⁶⁴¹ Tone, "Second Memorial to the French Government on the Present State of Ireland." f. 97

⁶⁴² Ibid.

No revolution was needed to teach the world that the greater disproportion of fortunes is the source of many evils and many crimes. But we are no less convinced that equality of goods is a chimera. The point is more to render poverty honourable than to proscribe opulence.⁶⁴³

Indeed, there were those in French government who had made similar arguments, based instead on the protection of property from the landowners' perspective. For example, Talleyrand, at that stage bishop of Autun, had put it to the National Assembly in 1789 that seizing Church lands would not necessarily lead to the demise of individual property laws, as the former was a public entity and was therefore subject to the will of the nation. He made these arguments in response to a wider fear about attacks on individual property.⁶⁴⁴ Yet this was not a mainstream argument and hence, Tone only seemed to interact with the more conventional view which would become associated with Jacobin attacks on Church property.

In spite of his plans against the Church of Ireland, Tone planned to protect freedom of religion. If France did agree to assist Irish efforts against British rule, one of Tone's chief recommendations was that the French force produce a manifesto affirming their intentions, a "disavowal of all idea of conquest".⁶⁴⁵ It was a time of considerable discomfort, particularly in Britain, at the prospect of French universal dominion, Tone seeking to allay centuries-old fears about the country's global ambitions now embodied by an aggressive republican government.⁶⁴⁶ Tone also wanted any such manifesto to state French plans for "free exercise of all religions without distinction or preference and the perpetual abolition of all ascendancy or connection between church and state".⁶⁴⁷ France's Constitution of the Year III (1795) made two significant points on the relationship between religion and the state: Article 352 held that "the law does not recognise religious vows nor any obligation contrary to the natural rights of man", while Article 354 stipulated that "no one can be forced to contribute to the expenses of a religion. The Republic does not pay a stipend to any of them".⁶⁴⁸ This

⁶⁴³ Maximilien Robespierre, *Euvres Complètes: Robespierre à Arras : Les Oeuvres Littéraires En Prose et En Vers*, vol. 9 (Paris: E. Leroux, 1910), 459.

⁶⁴⁴ On the debates on individual property, also see: Rafe Blaufarb, "The Invention of the National Domain," in *The Great Demarcation: The French Revolution and the Invention of Modern Property* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 119–48; Florin Aftalion, "The Question of Property Rights," in *The French Revolution: An Economic Interpretation*, 1990, 187–91.

⁶⁴⁵ Tone, "Second Memorial to the French Government on the Present State of Ireland." f. 94

⁶⁴⁶ Patrick O'Brien, "Fiscal Exceptionalism: Great Britain and Its European Rivals: From Civil War to Triumph at Trafalgar and Waterloo," in *The Political Economy of British Historical Experience: 1688-1914*, ed. D. Winch and Patrick O'Brien (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 245–67; Steven C.A. Pincus, "Assassination, Association, and the Consolidation of Revolution," in *1688: The First Modern Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 437–73; Andrew C. Thompson, "Early Eighteenth-Century Britain as a Confessional State," in *Cultures of Power in Europe during the Long Eighteenth Century*, ed. Hamish Scott and Brendan Simms (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 96–100.

⁶⁴⁷ Tone, "Second Memorial to the French Government on the Present State of Ireland." f. 94

⁶⁴⁸ Frank Maloy Anderson, ed., *The Constitutions and Other Select Documents Illustrative of the History of France, 1789-1907* (Minneapolis: H.W. Wilson, 1908), 252.

is a crucial difference between Jacobin ideas and Tone's views, as he is much clearer about the freedom to exercise all religions, contrary to the Enlightenment-era emphasis on reason prevailing at all costs.

Tone does not comment specifically on the confiscation of Church land in France, a point of note given that the topic was such a major talking point in Britain, serving as ammunition with which Burke could attack the Revolution and its assaults on tradition, religion, and property, three elements which he viewed as essential to human society.⁶⁴⁹ The fact that he discusses the issue in his writings to the French government in the context of an Irish revolution, but did not address it previously in his publications aimed at British and Irish audiences, does however imply that these ideas did not appear consistent or even wholly genuine. Tone does not mention the obvious argument against the Church of Ireland that the majority of the Irish people adhered to the Catholic Church; so, by overtly looking to the French example, his plan would actually be benefitting Catholics.

Jacobin violence:

Several of Tone's letters which have been considered so far have revealed a tendency to manipulate the recipients. This is particularly true when he writes to contacts in the Directory and French military. As such, many of his personal writings on the Revolution must be treated with caution. It is therefore significant that one of his most coherent analyses can be found not in a discussion with French officials, but in his own journals. There he discussed his opposition to Jacobin violence, both state-led and in the legitimisation of popular violence.⁶⁵⁰ By 1796, Tone's diaries revealed his concerns about the Revolution's violent turn over the course of the preceding three years. Upon visiting the Temple where Louis XVI had been imprisoned and the site of Marie Antoinette's last stay of execution, he said of the prison: "Nothing can be imagined more gloomy...It made me melancholy to look at it".⁶⁵¹ His diaries of March 1796 further demonstrate his disdain for the violent excesses of Jacobin rule. In these discussions of the Jacobins, the term is taken to mean the French party which had governed prior to the Directory, who had placed ultimate emphasis on the supremacy of 'the people', as evidenced by their moves to increase the franchise and reform popular education.⁶⁵² In Britain, the generic term 'Jacobin' was sometimes used interchangeably with 'radical'.

⁶⁴⁹ Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, 181–82, 229.

⁶⁵⁰ Stanley Hoffman, "A Note on the French Revolution and the Language of Violence," *Past and Present* 116, no. 2 (Spring 1987): 149–56; Kevin Duong, "The People as a Natural Disaster: Redemptive Violence in Jacobin Political Thought," *The American Political Science Review* 111, no. 4 (2017): 786–800; Patrice L.R. Higonnet, "A Narrative of the French Revolution from a Jacobin Perspective," in *Goodness Beyond Virtue: Jacobins During the French Revolution* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998), 10–76.

⁶⁵¹ Tone, *Life*, 41.

⁶⁵² Higonnet, "The Limitless Claims of the Public Sphere," 125–44.

At the time of Tone's writing, the Jacobins were looked back on as the architects of conflict in Europe and the Great Terror. Tone had been told that "it was the jacobin party who expected to come in, not the terrorists, but the true original jacobins who had begun the Revolution".⁶⁵³ While little has been made of this remark in scholarship, the quote is illuminative of Tone's view that the violent "terrorist" Jacobins had corrupted the "true original" purpose of steering France away from tyranny.⁶⁵⁴ In describing those who had begun the Revolution as the "true original Jacobins", he references the earlier period of French radicalism prior to its misapplication under Robespierre. Indeed, the Constitution of Year III, the legislation most recent at the time of Tone's writing, was more similar to the constitution introduced in 1791 as it sought to steer the course of the Revolution back towards more moderate, less violent principles.

Tone saw the Directory as being true to the less chaotic ideals that had first shaped the Revolution in 1789, because the government of 1795-99 had curbed violence but remained committed to foreign expansion and spreading republican values abroad. The comments above are not made in his letters to government figures, but in his private diaries. He reports that if the 'original' Jacobins "were in power, he was sure they would give us 10,000 men". "I should be glad the jacobins were to come again in to play," he adds, "for I think a little more energy just now would do the French Government no harm".⁶⁵⁵ His hopes for "more energy" from future French parties reflected his frustrations at the negotiations in Paris, in which he had felt unable to convince military or political figures to aid Ireland with sufficient manpower. In his relatively frequent meetings with the Foreign Affairs department, which he spent giving them information on how to set about an invasion of Ireland, he had experienced first-hand their disorganisation. His comments came in the context of the France's financial difficulties, hence the prospect of further change of government.

As seen in his early views on the monarchy, Tone's response to the French Revolution was relatively conventional in terms of an Irish Patriot stance. He supported constitutional change but opposing the Terror, which many deemed Robespierre's corruption of civic virtue.⁶⁵⁶ Another school of thought, epitomised by Fox's strand of the Whigs in England, held that while the violence of the Revolution was regrettable, Europe's monarchies should take the blame for opposing what had initially been a

⁶⁵³ Tone, 46–47.

⁶⁵⁴ Dunne comments on it in passing in: Dunne, *Colonial Outsider*, 37.

⁶⁵⁵ Tone, *Life*, 47.

⁶⁵⁶ Alfred Cobban, "The Political Ideas of Maximilien Robespierre during the Period of the Convention," *The English Historical Review* 61, no. 239 (January 1946): 45–80; Francis Leary, "Robespierre: The Meaning of Virtue," *The Virginia Quarterly Review* 72, no. 1 (Winter 1996): 104–22; Gregory Dart, "Despotism of Liberty: Robespierre and the Illusion of Politics," in *Rousseau, Robespierre and English Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1–16.

peaceful transition of power and any acts which would instigate the downfall of absolutism, violent or otherwise, were to be encouraged.⁶⁵⁷ Modern historiography has focused on the distorted morality of the “Incorruptible” Robespierre. He had transformed from one of the Revolution’s great reformers, advocating austerity, universal male suffrage, and toleration of Protestants and Jews – some of which fell in line with Tone’s thinking – into a cult-like figure fashioning an increasingly narrow version of republicanism. The true nature of his political mission caused great division at the time among Whigs in Britain. For Robespierre, the Terror was the ultimate “emanation of Virtue” and the guillotine a necessity. In spite of his admiration for the Revolution’s emphasis on virtue, this was where Tone drew the line.⁶⁵⁸

Thus, while the French republic provided an initial model which could be followed in Ireland, Tone recognised within it a number of problematic elements. What impressed him most were the Directory’s aspirations to transport republican values to other nations, something which held promise for Ireland. That seems to have informed his writings, particularly those which were drafted specifically to be read by the French government. It should not be taken at face value, therefore, that he was swayed by elements of the Revolution that had preceded the period in which he was in France, such as attacks on Church property starting with Talleyrand and heightening under the Committee of Public Safety. Thus, while the French Revolution is likely to have made some impact on his political thought, it should not be seen as the primary influence. In any case, his interpretation of how its events unfolded was far more nuanced than has previously been considered. While it has been acknowledged elsewhere that Tone’s feelings on the Revolution were complex, this chapter’s consideration of his views on different phases of the Revolution between 1790 and 1796 (when he arrived in France) enhances historical understandings of his relationship with French ideas. By analysing his views on monarchy, attacks on religion, and Jacobin violence more thoroughly, it has been shown that he was not just a standard, non-Burkean Whig, but equally that there was very little in his ideas which could be traced exclusively to French Enlightenment thinking.

Tone’s time in Paris (1796-98)

Tone had evidently kept up with contemporary French affairs from afar, and much of his consideration of different elements of the Revolution was already in place by the time he arrived in Paris in February 1796. It was relatively commonplace for Irish political exiles to go to Paris, and

⁶⁵⁷ H.T. Dickinson, “The Political Context,” in *The Cambridge Companion to British Literature of the French Revolution in the 1790s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 1–16; Jennifer Mori, “Parties and Politics,” in *Britain in the Age of the French Revolution: 1785-1820* (Oxon: Routledge, 2014), 1–31; Michael J. Turner, *The Age of Unease: Government and Reform in Britain, 1782-1832* (Thrupp: Sutton, 2000), 71.

⁶⁵⁸ Maximilien Robespierre, *Virtue and Terror (1794)*, ed. Slavoj Žižek (New York: Verso, 2017), 115.

indeed this pattern would be repeated in the summer of 1798 amidst the rebellion. This period of his exile was chiefly focused on the practicalities of gaining French assistance and measuring the challenges of a post-revolutionary society, rather than engaging with French ideas, even if the Directory's continued emphasis on citizen duty, volunteerism, and militarism appealed to him. His argument to the French authorities was that it would be beneficial to reduce Britain's power due to an "irreconcilable opposition of interests" between the two countries, and that this could be achieved by separating Britain from Ireland, thereby diminishing its resources.⁶⁵⁹ The intensity of the rivalry between England and France meant this was an obvious argument to appeal to the latter.⁶⁶⁰

When Tone first set foot in the French capital, some of his initial activities were those of a visitor, rather than a political exile. Sylvie Kleinman has explained the practicalities and logistics of Tone's time there, taking into account his ability to speak French and the logging of his experiences in his diaries.⁶⁶¹ There is a great deal of symbolism in Tone's visit to the Pantheon, coming within his first month in Paris, which would imply that seeing the resting place of the *philosophes* was one of his priorities. Until 1791, when it was turned into a secular building, the Pantheon had been the Church of Ste-Geneviève. From that year onwards, it became a place to house great thinkers, many of whom were credited with the ideas of the revolution, including Voltaire and Rousseau. His decision to attend their resting place suggests some familiarity with their works, though equally it would not have taken much in-depth interest for him to hail the Pantheon as "a depository of the kind, sacred to every thing that is sublime, illustrious, and patriotic".⁶⁶²

He noted too, that "two at least of their mighty dead" had been removed from the building: "[Jean-Paul] Marat, whom I believe to have been a sincere enthusiast, incapable of feeling or remorse, and Mirabeau, whom I look upon to have been a most consummate scoundrel".⁶⁶³ Marat (1743-1793) had been a radical Jacobin, and Mirabeau (1749-1791) had argued for a constitutional monarchy but saw his reputation ruined by scandal. His comments against these two figures echoed the policies of the French government, who had disinterred Mirabeau and Marat from the Pantheon in November 1794 and February 1795 respectively, with Mirabeau's bust also attacked in the Jacobin club and figures of

⁶⁵⁹ Tone, "First Memorial to the French Government on the Present State of Ireland."

⁶⁶⁰ Stella Ghervas, "Balance of Power vs. Perpetual Peace: Paradigms of European Order from Utrecht to Vienna, 1713–1815," *The International History Review* 39, no. 3 (2017): 404–25; Isaac Nakhimovsky, "Vattel's Theory of the International Order: Commerce and the Balance of Power in the Law of Nations," *History of European Ideas* 33, no. 2 (2007).

⁶⁶¹ Kleinman, "A Rough Guide to Revolutionary Paris: Wolfe Tone as an Accidental Tourist".

⁶⁶² Tone, *Life*, 41.

⁶⁶³ The term 'enthusiasm' had negative connotations throughout the eighteenth century, initially because of its connection to religious fervour, but later because of it could be used to deride those campaigning for democracy, particularly in France. See: J.G.A. Pocock, "Edmund Burke and the Redefinition of Enthusiasm: The Context as Counter-Revolution," in *The French Revolution and the Creation of Political Culture*, ed. François Furet and Mona Ozouf, vol. 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 19–43.

Marat smashed in public places by Jacobin crowds, to be replaced by heads of Rousseau. Both Marat and Mirabeau had by then been denounced as traitors to the Revolution, calls which were led by Robespierre, though it was he who had insisted upon Mirabeau's original burial there.⁶⁶⁴ Tone had evidently taken this sentiment on board, since he added to these denunciations in his private diaries – meaning that they were not, on this occasion, written for the reception of the Directory. It is perhaps unsurprising that he makes this comment on Marat's 'enthusiasm' given his opposition to the Revolution's violent disintegration, Marat having encouraged the September Massacres in 1792, albeit regretting them afterwards.⁶⁶⁵ As for Mirabeau, not only were there suspicions of corruption of the kind Tone had opposed so vehemently among MPs in Ireland, he was never going to be embraced because of his defence of the monarchy and his arguments that kings generally ruled in the interests of the people.⁶⁶⁶

Tone was so impressed by the Pantheon that in his diaries, he commented on his hopes to emulate it "if we have a Republic in Ireland", though "we must not, like the French, be in too great a hurry to people it... We already have a few to begin with: Roger O'Moore, Molyneux, Swift, and Dr. Lucas, all good Irishmen".⁶⁶⁷ This list of Irish Patriots is hugely significant if Tone believes they would be the heroes of the new republic. Nevertheless, he may have been attempting to carve out an invented tradition of Irish intellectual republicanism within which these writers did not actually apply. As discussed in greater detail in Chapter One, these Patriot writers from earlier in the eighteenth century were not republicans at all and argued only for greater Irish autonomy. Swift, for example, despite his campaigns on behalf of the Irish people in works such as the *Drapier's Letters* (1724-5), would likely not have taken kindly to being described as a founding pillar of an Irish republic, as evidenced by his complex identity as an Anglo-Irishman and his associations with both the Tories and the Church of Ireland.⁶⁶⁸ He saw himself as predominantly connected to England, rather than Ireland.⁶⁶⁹ Swift's penchant for Republican Rome would have appealed to Tone, but his patriotism extended only to demanding more parliamentary freedom for Ireland and never progressed towards republicanism.⁶⁷⁰

⁶⁶⁴ Peter McPhee, *Robespierre: A Revolutionary Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 34; D. Higgins, "Rousseau and the Pantheon," *The Modern Language Review* 50 (January 1, 1955): 274–80.

⁶⁶⁵ Karl Kautsky, "The Traditions of the Reign of Terror," in *Terrorism and Communism: A Contribution to the Natural History of Revolution* (Oxon: Routledge, 2011), 136–37.

⁶⁶⁶ David W. Bates, *Enlightenment Aberrations: Error and Revolution in France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018), 123–24.

⁶⁶⁷ Tone, 41.

⁶⁶⁸ Swift, *Drapier's Letters* (1724-5). Swift's multi-faceted relationship with England is particularly evident in one of his most notable satires, which was interpreted by many as an attack on the Church of England: Jonathan Swift, *A Tale of a Tub*.

⁶⁶⁹ Virginia La Grand, "Notes from a Native Son: Swift's Intelligencer," 143–65.

⁶⁷⁰ James William Johnson, "Swift's Historical Outlook," *Journal of British Studies* 4, no. 2 (May 1965): 52–77.

Likewise, Tone cites Charles Lucas, the physician and political writer, most politically active in the 1760s. Lucas opposed measures by the British privy council and parliament to overrule the Dublin parliament on matters of Irish domestic policy. It was a campaign similar to the one Tone would pick up on himself in the late 1780s and early 1790s to reform the representative system and ensure the freedom of the Irish House of Commons.⁶⁷¹ It is this element of Lucas' political life upon which Tone focuses, not his reputation for anti-Catholicism.⁶⁷² Even in light of historian Seán Murphy's partial rehabilitation of Lucas's "bigotry", Tone would still not have ostensibly agreed with many of his arguments, such as Catholics paying quarterage to support Protestant trade. That would have been difficult to ignore, even if Lucas is grouped with Swift, in this context, as a Patriot who campaigned against Britain's interference in Irish affairs.⁶⁷³

O'Moore is perhaps the most accurate inclusion in Tone's list, having been one of the main architects of the 1641 rebellion led by the Catholic gentry as they tried to take control back from the English administration. It had transpired into attacks on English and Scottish settlers too, adding the Protestant sense of insecurity over Catholic concessions.⁶⁷⁴ The O'Moore family's land had been seized in the preceding century, one factor which inspired his role in the rebellion, which was aimed at overturning Protestant power in Ireland but retaining the connection with the British Crown.⁶⁷⁵ A further writer who Tone lists as one of these "good Irishmen" is Molyneux, who had stated that Henry II intended for Ireland to have its own parliament and for it to be independent of Westminster, but still under the Crown.⁶⁷⁶ As discussed previously, Molyneux remained prominent in the imaginations of those looking to continue the battle for Irish legislative freedom, so regularly cited by pamphleteers and writers.⁶⁷⁷ Molyneux's was among the most articulate arguments against the legal precedent for Westminster legislating for Ireland – with many British MPs believing they had the right to do so. Tone stated in his memoirs that "the influence of England was the radical vice of our Government", a conclusion he believed he had drawn himself but conceded he "might have found it in Swift and

⁶⁷¹ Charles Lucas, *A Second Address to the Right Hon. the Lord Mayor, the Aldermen, Sheriffs, Commons, Citizens, and Freeholders of the City of Dublin - with an Answer to a New Address to His Lordship and the Citizens* (Dublin: Alex McCulloh, 1766); Charles Lucas, *The Political Constitutions of Great Britain and Ireland*; Charles Lucas, *A Remonstrance Against Certain Infringements*.

⁶⁷² Leighton, *Catholicism in a Protestant Kingdom: A Study of the Irish Ancien Régime*; Murphy, "Charles Lucas, Catholicism and Nationalism," 83–102; Seán Murphy, "Charles Lucas and the Dublin Election of 1748–1749," *Parliamentary History* 2, no. 1 (December 1983): 93–111.

⁶⁷³ Charles Lucas, *A Tenth Address to the Free Citizens, and Free-Holders, of the City of Dublin* (Dublin, 1748); Charles Lucas, *A Remonstrance Against Certain Infringements*.

⁶⁷⁴ M. Perceval-Maxwell, "The Outbreak of the Rebellion," in *The Outbreak of the Irish Rebellion of 1641* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 1994), 213–40.

⁶⁷⁵ Geoffrey Keating, *History of Ireland - From the Earliest Period to the English Invasion*, trans. John O'Mahony, vol. 1–3 (New York: Irish Genealogical Foundation, 1983), 716.

⁶⁷⁶ William Molyneux, *The Case of Ireland's Being Bound by Acts of Parliament in England, Stated* (London: J. Almon, 1698), 13.

⁶⁷⁷ Patrick Kelly, "William Molyneux and the Spirit of Liberty in Eighteenth-Century Ireland," *Eighteenth-Century Ireland* 3 (1988): 133–48.

Molyneux”, Irish Patriot arguments underpinning his core beliefs about the relationship between the two countries.⁶⁷⁸

When the names drafted in his Irish Pantheon are considered then, it appears that what Tone really referred to as a ‘republic’ was not far estranged from the kind of political system envisaged by a fairly conventional Irish Whig. He does describe it as a ‘republic of Ireland’, nevertheless, rather than simply using the term ‘republican’ – suggesting he did envisage this society to be without the British monarch. His earlier comments, in which he expressed some sympathy with Louis XVI, appear focused on the king’s fate as an individual, rather than the demise of his political function. Indeed, one theme that becomes apparent from his brief summaries of his time in Paris is that he does not always engage with the political scene at an intellectual level, often distracted by the symbolism of events rather than fully analysing the ideas behind them.

After all, the chief reason for his time in Paris was not necessarily to engross himself in contemporary affairs, but to gather support for an Irish rebellion. In his second memorial to the Directory, written in February 1796, he hoped to secure French support by promising an insurrection which would be “executed by the people of Ireland”, but one which would benefit from 20,000 men given by France.⁶⁷⁹ The rebellion would be the beginning of “separating that country [Ireland] from England” and what is more, “establishing her as an independent republic in strict alliance with France”.⁶⁸⁰

A functioning relationship had not been possible whilst maintaining any links with Britain, leading to the breakdown of Patriot vision for a kingdom which enjoyed a unique position not as a colony but as a partner. Crucial to the establishment of the new republic then, was the “reputation” which would go hand-in-hand with a military takeover. If these combined forces of Irish rebels and French soldiers could take hold of Dublin’s infrastructure –the Treasury, Post Office, Banks, and Custom House, and the parliament house are cited here – then Tone believed “we should have the reputation which would result from such a commencement”.⁶⁸¹ The architects of the new regime, while enjoying the status associated with military success in republican societies, would nevertheless rely on popular consent, as taking charge of Ireland’s civil apparatus would inspire confidence from its people. In order to achieve that, Tone advocated a bloodless revolution without violence, “without striking a blow, as in fact there would in that case be no organised force to make resistance” – hence why such a vast number of men was needed. Not only would this not have emulated the French Revolution, it was

⁶⁷⁸ Tone, *Life*, 32.

⁶⁷⁹ Tone, “Second Memorial to the French Government on the Present State of Ireland.” f. 93

⁶⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸¹ *Ibid.* f. 94

closer to Whig rhetoric on the Glorious Revolution, further suggesting that his plans for revolution were not exclusively influenced by developments in France.⁶⁸²

Volunteerism, patriotism and the military

Where Tone's writings during his time in Paris discuss the practicalities and merits of revolution, they also contain a persistent emphasis on the need for an Irish rebellion to be borne out of duty to the state. In his memorial to the French government, there are several examples of Tone drawing on the idea of military service as an obligation to the nation. From the early 1790s, the *sans-culottes* volunteers of the French Revolutionary armies had provided a clear example of this type of patriotic sentiment, joining up to both smaller 'conventional' volunteer movements and more mainstream armies to fight for the revolutionary cause. Yet Tone's plans for the Irish militia to "join the standard of their country" and for the "people at large" to "flock to the Republican standard", could also reflect his pre-existing admiration for the Roman republic, where citizens were required to complete military service.⁶⁸³ Such an emphasis on military service had been reinvigorated in late eighteenth-century France, but it was not peculiar to this era – see the speech of Sarpedon in Homer's *Iliad* (XVI), or indeed examples in the Jewish tradition – but it took on a new significance in eighteenth-century political thought.⁶⁸⁴ The French Revolution had at least brought new contemporary perspectives on the relationship between 'the people' and military duty, notably in the wake of the August 1793 *levée en masse*, a time of mass conscription but one which held that the people were defending the Republic of their own free will.⁶⁸⁵ Military service was therefore one of the most successful manifestations of

⁶⁸² Just as Tone believed revolution could be achieved "without a blow", the 'bloodless' characterisation of the Glorious Revolution was central to the Whig tradition. Lionel K.J. Glassey, "In Search of the Mot Juste: Characterizations of the Revolution of 1688-89," in *The Final Crisis of the Stuart Monarchy: The Revolutions of 1688-91 in Their British, Atlantic and European Contexts*, ed. Tim Harris and Stephen Taylor (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2013), 1–33; Steven C.A. Pincus, *1688: The First Modern Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 21.

⁶⁸³ Tone, "Second Memorial to the French Government on the Present State of Ireland." f. 94

⁶⁸⁴ Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. Rodney Merrill (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2007). Joseph M. Bryant, *Moral Codes and Social Structure in Ancient Greece: A Sociology of Greek Ethics From Homer to the Epicureans and Stoics* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996), 29–30. In Britain, discussions about militias were partly a product of the unstable union with Scotland and were seen as an alternative to Scotland contributing to an expensive standing army: John Robertson, *The Scottish Enlightenment and the Militia Issue* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1984), 11–13, 214.

⁶⁸⁵ Alan Forest, *Conscripts and Deserters: The Army and French Society During the Revolution and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 29–34; Alan Forest, "La Patrie En Danger: The French Revolution and the First *Levée En Masse*," in *The People in Arms: Military Myth and National Mobilization Since the French Revolution*, ed. Daniel Moran and Arthur Waldron (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 8–33; Alan Forest, "Recruiting the Soldiers," in *The Soldiers of the French Revolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 58–89; Alan Forest, "The Insurgency of the Vendée," in *Small Wars and Insurgencies in Theory and Practice, 1500-1850*, ed. Beatrice Heuser (New York: Routledge, 2017), 800–813; Owen Connelly, "The Terror: Politics and Army Reform, 1793-94," in *The Wars of the French Revolution and Napoleon, 1792-1815* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 40–45.

patriotic sentiment, with ‘military republicanism’ extolling the superiority of citizen armies over the seemingly outdated professional armies which had defended Europe’s monarchies.⁶⁸⁶

The success of the French army in the 1790s was, by its supporters, put down partly to its revival of ancient republican military principles. The appeal of using French soldiers for an Irish rebellion was that they “had actually seen hard service and who would be capable of training and disciplining the Irish army”, which suggests much of the latter would not be made up of professional soldiers but volunteers.⁶⁸⁷ This would also serve another of Tone’s purposes. He could portray Britain quashing the rising as an act of “tyranny”, as by employing troops against the people, that country was “bringing Ireland under the yoke of British tyranny even more than she is at present”. At the same time, he could also warn France that failing to provide adequate numbers would render “all prospect of [Ireland’s] emancipation at any future period impracticable”, as well as costing French “men and money”.⁶⁸⁸

In laying out his plans for Ireland’s volunteers, Tone also reaffirms his views on the potential of using property as a tool for rewarding political allies. He recommends “protection of property to all who should demean themselves as good citizens and friends to the liberties of their country, with strong denunciations against those who should support or countenance the cause of British tyranny and usurpation”.⁶⁸⁹ There is an obvious parallel between Tone’s “denunciations” and the treatment of perceived ‘enemies of the people’ which had taken hold under Robespierre’s Committee of Public Safety. In line with Jacobin rhetoric, Tone was here suggesting that transgressing from the common aim, or ‘general will’ was equivalent to undermining the people entirely. In this same document, Tone describes Great Britain as an “enemy of the republic”, having taken its side in Europe’s battle between the old regimes and a new world order. Tone contrasted these “enemies” with typical republican good “citizens”, encouraging “every individual who should distinguish himself by his zeal, courage and ability” to be recommended to “the future Legislature of their country”.⁶⁹⁰ Tone wanted Ireland’s own national convention to be made up of “men of a certain rank in life and situation as to property (for instance the actual members of the Catholic Committee), who must be those who would naturally form the convention”.⁶⁹¹ These were men who had demonstrated their suitability for government through their existing social and political standing. Likewise, soldiers would be rewarded

⁶⁸⁶ Istvan Hont, “The Permanent Crisis of a Divided Mankind: ‘Nation-State’ and ‘Nationalism’ in Historical Perspective,” in *Jealousy of Trade: International Competition and the Nation-State in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2005), 447–528.

⁶⁸⁷ Tone, “Second Memorial to the French Government on the Present State of Ireland.” f. 94

⁶⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁰ Ibid. f. 95

⁶⁹¹ Ibid. f. 96

for their service to the nation with “a provision in land or otherwise at the end of the war, according to the rank of each”.⁶⁹² His plans for the Irish military are therefore based predominantly on classical republican values rather than being framed by the French example, even if he may have attempted to suggest the latter’s influence in his writings for the Directory. In an Irish context, a precedent had also been set by the confiscations of Jacobite land under the Williamite regime in the 1690s.⁶⁹³

As demonstrated in his views on volunteerism, Tone viewed military duty as key to moulding the kind of virtuous citizens who could be trusted with such freedom. The final three essays which warrant discussion from his time in France are his addresses from December 1796, all written on the same day. The first *To the Irishmen now serving abroad the British navy*, the second *To the militia of Ireland*, and the third, *To the people of Ireland* all advocated a political system where each citizen would be tied to the state by military duty.⁶⁹⁴ In this seamless blending of soldiers and ordinary civilians, in his *To the Irishmen now serving abroad the British navy*, he declared that Irish independence would be secured thanks to those citizens willing to welcome the French invasion, as “the people who have received those gallant soldiers as brothers and friends have given a decided proof of their love for liberty”.⁶⁹⁵

In this document, Irishmen serving in the British navy are also referred to as “countrymen”, evoking a sense of national duty by further urging them to “serve your country and to make your fortunes”. These Irishmen are reminded of the potential power and status available to them were they not subjugated by Great Britain. In fact, Tone is so eager to promise a republic in which it would be personally advantageous to defend the nation that he contradicts his more prevalent republican arguments against commerce. Indeed, he urges his readers to think “independant [sic] of your individual profit, think of the service you will render your country, who by your means will recover perfect freedom of commerce and become one of the most powerful maritime states of Europe”. This also means the image of Tone as a romantic national thinker should be further undermined, given that his arguments were partly based on the potential for wealth and commerce, rather than national identity or sovereignty, a distinctly un-romantic standpoint. Even if he had opposed this type of commercial thinking in America, here he argues for commercial empire as a positive thing, and perhaps distinct from the potentially despotic territorial imperialism associated with France, for

⁶⁹² Ibid.

⁶⁹³ Rolf Loeber and Harman Murtagh, eds., “Prelude to Confiscation: A Survey of Catholic Estates in Leinster in 1690,” *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 131 (2001): 61–139; Jonathan I Israel, “The Dutch Role in the Glorious Revolution,” in *The Anglo-Dutch Moment: Essays on the Glorious Revolution and Its World Impact* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 158; Simms, *The Williamite Confiscation in Ireland: 1690-1703*, 9–12, 160–63.

⁶⁹⁴ Tone, “To the Irishmen Now Serving Aboard the British Navy”; Tone, “To the Militia of Ireland”; Tone, “To the People of Ireland,” 22.

⁶⁹⁵ Tone, “To the Irishmen Now Serving Aboard the British Navy.” f. 15

example. His discussions of “militia” reiterate a sense of national emergency. In Ancient Rome, there was debate regarding whether a person’s devotion to the republic needed to be militarily expressed or whether it was sufficient for citizens to embody stoicism and virtue.⁶⁹⁶ In the case of Tone’s interpretation, civic duty was both a self-reliant, moral way of life, but also something that necessitated action.

Similarly to the terms he uses to address these navy men, he addresses the militia as “brave soldiers!” and implores them to “quit then the columns [sic] of your tyrants and join the warlike and victorious standard of the French”.⁶⁹⁷ Much of Europe was experiencing a resurgence in ancient republican ideas about military service throughout the 1790s in response to the success of the French model, which had relied heavily on the patriotic devotion of its people. While the French militias were small and did not require the same level of service from members, this was one factor that encouraged the move of many states towards forming ‘national armies’ of their own, as opposed to traditional standing armies, a shift from the professional to the volunteer. This held peculiar relevance for Ireland, given that so many of its citizens served in the British army and navy. There was also a tradition of volunteerism, at its most fervent in the northern counties. The Irish Volunteers would not necessarily have been receptive to Tone’s ideas. Many of them had been involved in reform movements of preceding decades and were not radicals or revolutionaries. In fact, many of them would go on to fight against the United Irishmen in 1798 and many would join the yeomanry.

By the time of Tone’s writing, he was essentially addressing groups which were prohibited following the clampdown on radicalism. The 1793 Gunpowder Act had served as a death knell to the Irish Volunteers by preventing the importation of gunpowder and weapons. He nevertheless views such volunteer groups – perhaps not the Irish Volunteers specifically - as an essential part of a post-revolution Irish society. In one subtle difference between these addresses, he refers to Great Britain as a “common enemy” when writing to the people, and as a “natural enemy” when writing to the militia. The purpose of this is twofold: to convince “the people” that they held an interest in protecting Ireland against a foreign power, regardless of their own religion or identities, and secondly, because by describing a “natural enemy”, he suggests it is inevitable that the militia will be called into action.

That Tone was preparing to rely on the aid of the militia adds further weight to his earlier ideas about a ‘people’s army’, which he had honed during his time in America. Thus, he wrote these addresses to the militia and to the Irish people at a time when he was predominantly corresponding with the French army. Tone was in regular contact with Henri Jacques Guillaume Clarke, a prominent Franco-Irish

⁶⁹⁶ Sam Wilkinson, *Republicanism During the Early Roman Empire* (London: A & C Black, 2012), 61–77.

⁶⁹⁷ Tone, “To the Militia of Ireland.” f. 15

general. Clarke's parents were Irish, and he had many close allies within the Irish Brigade of the French army.⁶⁹⁸ Tone wrote to him 13 times between May 1796 and September 1796, chiefly to ask for favours and to arrange meetings with him. These letters reiterate that Tone was, at least at this stage, most concerned with the practicalities of ensuring French support and with day-to-day life in Paris. For instance, in his first letter, he asked for Clarke's assistance in keeping him in the city amidst a law that meant foreigners had to leave.⁶⁹⁹

He also sought the same assurances from Charles Delacroix, French Minister for Foreign Affairs under the Directory [November 1795-July 1797].⁷⁰⁰ Later, he requested assistance with money from Clarke, and on a separate occasion, on June 14, 1796, he expressed his concerns at a report, which he was admittedly dubious about, that "a landing has been effected in Ireland to the number of 15,000 men".⁷⁰¹ Clarke allayed Tone's fears that an expedition had been sent to Ireland prematurely, and without necessary discretion for a landing, although he concedes his audience with the general lasted "two minutes".⁷⁰² While Tone's correspondence with these prominent figures is often matter-of-fact, in one letter to Delacroix (September 17, 1796), he thanked the minister for his assistance in Paris, shortly before leaving for Rennes, signing off with the message: "My country is indebted to your patriotism and your zeal for the cause of freedom", a further indication that he saw the expansion of French republicanism into sister republics as a progressive step.⁷⁰³

Much of Tone's writing in Paris attempted to convey his views on post-revolutionary France back to the Irish people, defending the French government against accusations that their original guiding principles had been lost somewhere along the way. Firstly, in a *Proclamation to the People of Ireland*, (June 1796), Tone insisted that "the principles which govern the conduct of France...have been unvaryingly manifested since the revolution".⁷⁰⁴ That considered, the fact that Tone reiterates "the most inviolable respect for persons and property", to be preserved by the army, is significant, particularly as it draws on concerns about the Revolution that were widespread in Britain and

⁶⁹⁸ George B. Clark, "Henri J.G. Clarke - Count de Hunebourg, Duke de Feltre, Marshal of France," in *Irish Soldiers in Europe, 17th-19th Century* (Cork: Mercier Press, 2010), 140–78.

⁶⁹⁹ Wolfe Tone, "Letter to General Henri Jacques Guillaume Clarke," May 14, 1796, AF IV, carton 1671, f. 70, Archives Nationales.

⁷⁰⁰ Wolfe Tone, "Letter to Charles Delacroix," May 12, 1796, AF III 369, f. 50, Archives Nationales.

⁷⁰¹ Tone, "To General Henri Jacques Guillaume Clarke."

⁷⁰² Wolfe Tone, "Diary 14-23 June 1796," June 14, 1796, Tone Papers, MS 2049, f. 76, Trinity College Dublin.

⁷⁰³ Wolfe Tone, "Letter to Charles Delacroix," September 17, 1796, Corresp. Politique Angleterre, carton 589, f. 395, Archives des Affaires étrangères.

⁷⁰⁴ Wolfe Tone, "Proclamation to the People of Ireland," June 9, 1796, AF IV, carton 1671, Archives Nationales. Moody, McDowell, and Woods note that Clarke requested this as an abridged document only to include its most important points. Moody, McDowell, and Woods, *The Writings of Theobald Wolfe Tone, 1763-98: America, France and Bantry Bay, August 1795 to December 1796*, II:196.

Ireland.⁷⁰⁵ It is this that drives Elliott's conclusion that "Tone opposed any general attack on property, and throughout the negotiations dismissed any idea of restoring land confiscated from the Catholics".⁷⁰⁶ It represents a contradiction of his earlier comments on confiscating land from the Church of Ireland, which might have been restored to Catholics who had seen land confiscated after the Williamite wars. It also suggests, on the one hand, that his sincerity might be questioned, or at least that he was telling the Directory one thing, and the Irish people another. Tone, and the United Irish movement more generally, did not want to be seen as working counter to the interests of the upper classes. Instead, he describes the "sole object" of a French invasion as "the establishment of your independence...not to reduce you to a state of dependence upon France, but to break the chains which have so long bound you in subjection to England". Thus, he appears to regard France's sister republics as 'independent', regardless of whether they were obtained through military force. He believed Ireland could enjoy a similar relationship with France, having not been permitted this sense of autonomy by Britain.

Secondly, Tone defended the Revolution again in his *Address to the Peasantry of Ireland*, written in October 1796.⁷⁰⁷ Believing that negative public opinion had been influenced by the violence of the Revolution, he argued this was a result of deliberate efforts "in order to mislead and misinform you on the subject of the French revolution".⁷⁰⁸ He adds: "They have endeavoured to impress upon you with horror at the idea of the execution of the king, of the banishment and plunder of the nobility and especially of the clergy".⁷⁰⁹ While acknowledging that "in the course of the revolution many horrible acts of cruelty and injustice have been committed" and that the Committee of Public Safety had "sacrificed without distinction the innocent and the guilty" in the Terror, Tone suggests the outcome for the peasantry was still positive.⁷¹⁰ Taxes "in favour of the poor" had been abolished, which he hoped was the point which would resonate most strongly with peasants in Ireland.⁷¹¹ He names specifically the *corvée*, the *gabelle*, and the *taille*, which concerned unpaid labour, salt, and land respectively.

The purpose of this document is evidently to outline the merits of a republic which rewarded those who worked on the land, just as Jefferson had envisaged in America. Tone compares France before the revolution, when "the king, the clergy, the nobility and gentry possessed at least four fifths of all the land in France; the farmers and peasantry there, as with yourselves, were loaded with rents, taxes

⁷⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁶ Elliott, *Wolfe Tone*, 291.

⁷⁰⁷ Tone, "An Address to the Peasantry of Ireland - by a Traveller," October 14, 1796, f. 186.

⁷⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁷¹⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹¹ Ibid.

and tythes” to how the peasantry had advanced following the king’s demise.⁷¹² This represents a clear change in his thinking on the monarchy from the early stages of the French Revolution to the writing of this address in 1796. Tone had initially supported a system of constitutional monarchy in his earlier political life. Given that “all these heavy taxes and impositions went to the king,” he poses the question, “I leave you to judge whether the peasants at least have any reason to regret his loss”.⁷¹³ Whereas he often appears to interpret the French model as contrary to his more classical opinions on more prominent members of society being represented, here he hails the Revolution for its “abolition of all the unjust and oppressive distinctions which existed in France and a declaration that all men were free and equal in the sight of the law.”⁷¹⁴

Tone’s stint in Paris forced him to evaluate which elements of the French system he truly wanted to emulate in Ireland. He gave due consideration to the practicalities of rebellion, seeing the merits in volunteerism and emphasising the role of citizens in defending the republic. Yet the society he envisages, dependent on militias, and one in which the peasantry would be the main beneficiaries from fundamental political changes such as the abolition of some taxes, and with the king’s removal opening the door for increased representation, had been fine-tuned during his time in America and from his previous engagement with English and Irish republican thought. As such, he hand-picked certain elements of French political thought that already fitted in with his existing ideas. The only real exception to this was in his stance on the monarchy, which hardened once he had seen first-hand the benefits of its removal upon France’s third estate.

Conclusion:

It has long been accepted in scholarship that eighteenth-century French politics constituted a major influence on Tone’s political development. At the outset of this chapter, it was stated that it would attempt to build on the conclusions of Elliott and Smyth. Smyth points to the Irish Patriot tradition playing the most important role in Tone’s development, but this study in its entirety aims to demonstrate that his ideas cannot necessarily be attributed to one specific political backdrop. Elliott, meanwhile, argued that Tone took little from the early stages of the French Revolution because he was closer to a conventional Irish Whig. However, it has been necessary to deconstruct his political thought to refine this conclusion. More precisely, while Tone did engage with elements such as French anti-monarchism, or at least the shift towards constitutional monarchy, his strand of republicanism was not solely based on the French example. Where Tone’s ideas, both before and during his time in Paris, could to some extent be traced to the French Revolution, many of his

⁷¹² Ibid.

⁷¹³ Ibid.

⁷¹⁴ Ibid.

positions and arguments are in fact better compared to a combination of ancient republican and Whig ideas. As such, this chapter has sought to redress the over-emphasis on the intellectual links between Tone and France. In a similar way to how he was shaped by his time in America, he was inspired by ideas which corresponded with his ancient republican values, such as the French influence on military duty and civic virtue. Notably, he shied away from other discourse which emphasised universal rights. He also made several references to the Revolution having been corrupted by the radical democratic agenda of the Jacobins, which can partly be explained by his contact with the Directory as the government tried to move towards more moderate republicanism.

A running theme from Tone's writings during his exile in Paris is that he was impressed by the model of the French citizen, something which was to embody the four classical components of the cardinal virtues, justice, prudence, courage, and temperance.⁷¹⁵ He argued for a system in which each citizen would be incentivised to defend the nation. Yet these virtues were already being expressed in his early writings. Though there is not an abundance of evidence dating prior to the beginning of the French Revolution in 1789, he had already spelled out many of these ideas clearly in his *Sandwich Islands* memorandum of 1788.⁷¹⁶ It may be suggested, therefore, that the French backdrop re-affirmed or helped him to refine many of his previously held classical republican ideas, but did not directly inspire them.

In bringing universal male suffrage to the forefront of political discussion, the implication of the French Revolution was that the vote should be accessible to all and the wider population could then advance themselves and decide how best to use it. Indeed, Tone differed from mainstream French revolutionary political thought, for instance Sieyès' radical redefining of 'the nation', in a number of ways. He seemed to believe in maintaining the three estates, even if he advocated improved conditions for the peasantry. Moreover, he contradicted French thinkers, notably Rousseau, on the idea of direct democracy, instead arguing first that the franchise should be extended only to the Catholic gentry. What he was arguing for was a more effective system of representative democracy, supposing that a virtuous government would more accurately reflect the wishes of the people – but Tone does not argue for 'the people' to hold ultimate control. Thus, where much of the popularised rhetoric surrounding the Revolution, for example that of Paine, emphasised rights, Tone's republicanism was more centred around ancient ideas of duty.

⁷¹⁵ Kent Wright, "A Classical Republican in Eighteenth-Century France: The Political Thought of Mably," 190; S.J. Savonius-Wroth, Jonathan Walmsley, and Paul Schuurman, eds., *The Continuum Companion to Locke* (London: A & C Black, 2010), 208.

⁷¹⁶ Tone, "Proposal Submitted to William Pitt for the Establishment of a Military Colony in the Sandwich Islands."

Though on one occasion, in his February 1796 *Second Memorial to the French Government on the Present State of Ireland*, he appears to borrow from the early republicanism of the French Revolution on the issue of property redistribution in the event of an Irish rebellion, this idea does not appear consistently enough in his writings, especially given his prior views, to suggest any real intellectual commitment to it on his part. Indeed, the *Proclamation to the People of Ireland* which appeared subsequently still argued for the protection of private property upon a French landing in Ireland.⁷¹⁷

Insofar as Tone did believe in land redistribution, it was as a means of following the classical republican example of using property as a reward for military service. Of all the French revolutionary governments, it was the Directory his ideas seemed closest to, although the circumstances in which he wrote make it difficult to weigh up genuine beliefs against political expediency. There are clear attempts in his correspondence to make an Irish invasion more appealing to the Directory as he sought to emulate their own policies in his plans. To conclude, Tone's time in Paris did not dramatically alter his political ideas, but rather helped to refine them. Whilst Tone took very little from the French model in terms of his political thought, he used his time there to gauge the practicalities of organising, and subsequently maintaining, a revolution.

⁷¹⁷ Tone, "Proclamation to the People of Ireland."

Chapter Five: Tone's final years (1796-98)

The final period of Tone's life has been crucial to constructing his legacy, driving his image as the "recognised founder of Irish republican nationalism".⁷¹⁸ Tone spent his last two years preparing for a French-backed invasion but ended up playing little active part in the rebellion of 1798. At the beginning of 1797, he had returned to Europe with the rest of the fleet that had failed in the first expedition to Bantry Bay. The mission had been botched, thwarted partly by the misfortune of adverse weather conditions, but also by insufficient preparations.⁷¹⁹ The prominent Jacobin General, Lazare Hoche, who had led the voyage, invited Tone to remain part of his staff, though he himself now turned his attentions to the Rhine. Tone's own travels around northern Europe were shaped partly by Hoche's journey, with his family subsequently arriving in Hamburg. The Directory were reluctant to commit more men to the Irish revolutionary cause in the light of the unsuccessful 1796 invasion, at a time when French forces were already under-resourced and had more pertinent focuses elsewhere.⁷²⁰

By April 1797, Tone had reached the Batavian Republic and had begun to consider the merits of a Batavian expedition to Ireland instead. Yet his encounters with Dutch troops left him underwhelmed in comparison to his allies in the French army and as a result, he continued to contact French military officials while in the Hague. This final period of his life saw numerous setbacks to Tone's plans for a rebellion, not least Hoche's failure to convince the French government of the merits of another expedition to Ireland before his eventual death from consumption on 19 September 1797. While Tone was making little progress in France, preparations for the rebellion continued in Ireland, led by other members of the United Irish leadership.

Rebellion broke out in Ireland in May 1798. Sporadic revolts grew into a prolonged period of more serious agitation, until the unrest was suppressed in the September of 1798. Some of these insurrections were centrally planned by the United Irishmen, and others were more spontaneous disturbances which grew out of local agitation. As far as the more organised campaign was concerned, defeat at the Battle of Vinegar Hill on 21 June 1798 signalled the end of the United Irishmen's hopes of securing political independence from Britain. Tone's activities in Europe meant that he was far removed from the Irish rebellion itself, as evidenced by the lack of any clear

⁷¹⁸ Elliott, *Wolfe Tone*, 1.

⁷¹⁹ Thomas Bartlett, "Defence, Counter-Insurgency and Rebellion: Ireland, 1793-1803," in *A Military History of Ireland*, ed. Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffery (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 268–69.

⁷²⁰ Bailey Stone, "The Second Attempt to Stabilize the Revolution: From 1794 to 1799," in *Reinterpreting the French Revolution: A Global-Historical Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 209–59. Tone discusses the French government's slide towards bankruptcy in his diaries of February 1796: Wolfe Tone, "Diary No 2-3," March 16, 1796, MS 2048, f. 24, Trinity College Dublin.

correspondence with rebel leaders back in Ireland, unless we are to suppose that important documents may have been lost.⁷²¹ Tone had no direct relation to these events, and only the French intervention could really have been attributed to him. It turned out to be a relatively minor element of the rebellion, French troops joining forces with local rebels in August 1798.⁷²²

These events have received a great deal of scholarly and popular attention.⁷²³ One of the first published historical accounts of the 1798 rebellion, albeit one prone to exaggeration and likely informed in its characterisation of sectarian violence by the author's fear of further concessions to Catholics, came from information recorded by Sir Richard Musgrave in 1801.⁷²⁴ Historiography once again began to centre on 1798 in the second half of the twentieth century, when there was an increased focus among scholars on local peculiarities in the rebellion.⁷²⁵ For example, insurgency was at its most successful in the county of Wexford, as well as in the north, where Henry Joy McCracken led a largely Presbyterian agitation in Antrim. Debate has also centred on to what degree the rebellion was structured well enough to succeed. Popular history, such as that of Daniel Gahan, depicts more thorough organisation from United Irish figures, as opposed to a spontaneous series of uprisings around the country.⁷²⁶

Yet the biggest development in the historical study of 1798 was the shift, facilitated by various scholars, towards approaching the rebellion from a 'history-from-below' angle.⁷²⁷ The point of contest, taken up in a series of works around the bicentenary of the rebellion, appeared to centre on

⁷²¹ It seems plausible that he was isolated from the United Irish leadership due to his long-term exile and there is no evidence in his letters from this time which alludes to other documents which no longer exist.

⁷²² It is difficult to gauge the number of French troops due to the huge range in estimates provided by accounts of the time, but some suggest it was as little as 1000. Guy Beiner, *Remembering the Year of the French: Irish Folk History and Social Memory* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), 7–8.

⁷²³ On Ireland in the 1790s: Jim Smyth, "Introduction: The 1798 Rebellion in Its Eighteenth-Century Contexts," in *Revolution, Counter-Revolution and Union: Ireland in the 1790s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1–21; Alvin Jackson, "The Birth of Modern Irish Politics, 1790–8," in *Ireland 1798–1998: War, Peace and Beyond* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2010), 6–23; Ian McBride, "'When Ulster Joined Ireland': Anti-Popery, Presbyterian Radicalism and Irish Republicanism in the 1790s," *Past and Present*, no. 157 (November 1997): 63–93; Curtin, *The United Irishmen: Popular Politics in Ulster and Dublin*; Elliott, *Partners in Revolution: The United Irishmen and France*. Peter Collins, *Who Fears to Speak of '98'?: Commemoration and the Continuing Impact of the United Irishmen* (Belfast: Ulster Historical Foundation, 2004). Daire Keogh, *French Disease: The Catholic Church and Irish Radicalism, 1790–1800* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1993).

⁷²⁴ Sir Richard Musgrave, *Memoirs of the Different Rebellions in Ireland* (Dublin: R. Parchbank, 1801).

⁷²⁵ For examples of histories of the rebellion with a local focus, see: Thomas Powell, "An Economic Factor in the Wexford Rebellion of 1798," *Studia Hibernica* 16 (1976): 140–57; L.M. Cullen, "The 1798 Rebellion in Wexford: United Irishman Organisation, Membership, Leadership," 248–95. Liam Chambers, *Rebellion in Kildare, 1790–1803* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1998); Peadar Bates, *1798 Rebellion in Fingal: Preparation, Outbreak, and Aftermath* (Loughshinny: P. Bates, 1998); Joseph Holt, *Rebellion in Wicklow: General Joseph Holt's Personal Account of 1798*, ed. Peter O'Shaughnessy (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1998).

⁷²⁶ Gahan, *The People's Rising: The Great Wexford Rebellion of 1798*.

⁷²⁷ Ian McBride, "1798," in *Eighteenth Century Ireland: The Isle of Slaves* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2009). Part 4.

how seriously the political, religious, and economic grievances of the rebels should be taken, or whether the different phases of fighting might be more easily explained as outbursts of chaos, often rooted in sectarianism, and local disputes.⁷²⁸ Inevitably, the year of 1998 also brought significant popular interest in this particular dynamic due to the Good Friday Agreement, the end of the Troubles making the topic all the more relevant. The idea that Catholics and Protestants had fought alongside each other appealed to the majority who proved in favour of the Agreement.

While this new emphasis on the masses presented challenges for historians, not least in the availability of viable source material, it has allowed the events of that year in Ireland to be characterised in more nuanced ways. The question of the extent of the political understanding of the masses has been discussed by both Nancy Curtin and Jim Smyth, historians who have pointed to the level of populist radicalism in the 1790s.⁷²⁹ Alongside this increasing focus on the thousands of rebels, it has also been possible to see the 1798 rebellion as more about politicisation than sectarianism. Where much of the local violence had previously been considered sectarian, in the 1990s Kevin Whelan and Marianne Elliott both contributed to a deeper understanding of the Jacobite ideas that took hold among groups of civilians.⁷³⁰ Elliott's *Partners in Revolution* thus proved a key moment in the historiography of 1798, especially regarding the character of Defenderism and the importance of ideological links to France in the movement. For example, disturbances in Armagh could therefore be seen as politicised rather than merely sectarian. In this way, it has sometimes been beneficial to veer away from focusing on the United Irish leadership in order to achieve a broader view of the rebellion's dynamics on the ground, though in the context of this research, it is still useful to assess whether the rebellion achieved Tone's non-sectarian aims.

There is a consensus, at least, that the rebellion, from beginning to end, was multi-faceted, whether that took the form of rebels against the militia, tenants against landlords, or indeed a proxy-war between France and Britain taking another turn with the arrival of French troops.⁷³¹ What has not

⁷²⁸ For a summary of the revisionist historiography brought about by the 1998 bicentenary, see: Ian McBride, "Reclaiming the Rebellion: 1798 in 1998," *Irish Historical Studies* 31 (1999): 395–410; Thomas Bartlett et al., *The 1798 Rebellion: A Bicentennial Perspective* (Four Courts Press, 1999).

⁷²⁹ Jim Smyth, "The Politics of Disaffection, 1795–9," in *The Men of No Property: Irish Radicals and Popular Politics in the Late Eighteenth Century* (Basingstoke: Springer, 1998), 157–70; Nancy Curtin, *The United Irishmen: Popular Politics in Ulster and Dublin, 1791–1798* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

⁷³⁰ Kevin Whelan, *The Tree of Liberty: Radicalism, Catholicism and the Construction of Irish Identity 1760–1830* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996); Marianne Elliott, *Partners in Revolution: The United Irishmen and France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

⁷³¹ Kenneth L. Campbell, *Ireland's History: Prehistory to the Present* (London and New York: A & C Black, 2013); Smyth, "Introduction: The 1798 Rebellion in Its Eighteenth-Century Contexts"; Bartlett, "Defence, Counter-Insurgency and Rebellion: Ireland, 1793–1803"; Daniel Gahan, "Class, Religion and Rebellion: Wexford in 1798," in *Revolution, Counter-Revolution and Union: Ireland in the 1790s*, 83–99; Kevin Whelan, *Fellowship of Freedom: The United Irishmen and 1798* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1998). Since the bicentenary of 1798, historians have tended to focus further on how its events are remembered both locally and nationally: Daniel Gahan, *The People's Rising: The Great Wexford Rebellion of 1798*; Guy Beiner,

been examined in similar depth, however, is Tone's own views of the rebellion, and whether it fulfilled his aims: "To subvert the tyranny of our execrable government, to break the connection with England, the never-failing source of all our political evils, and to assert the independence of my country".⁷³² This is all the more surprising as his legacy in Irish culture is directly linked to the events of 1798, even if he was physically present in Ireland for very few of them. In addition, Tone left behind a variety of sources providing evidence of his views on the rebellion, chiefly his diary entries between 1797-1798, his letters to Generals Hoche, Bonaparte, and the Dutch General Daendels (1762-1818), his letters to his wife Matilda, and finally his speech from his court martial in Dublin. His last writings and speeches are of particular importance, as for a political figure whose ideas evolved so significantly over a decade, they present a case for his final mindset.

Elliott and Boylan have both traced Tone's path from reformer to revolutionary, asking the question of how a moderate reformer at the start of the decade had progressed towards advocating violence to achieve his aims.⁷³³ Dunne alleges this was predominantly a result of his exile, and that "expulsion from the colonial society where he had failed to find an effective role and which had proven so resistant to change, led him to a final and over-riding commitment to destroy the real basis of Ascendancy power, the English connection".⁷³⁴ Tone's failure to enact change certainly swayed him towards revolution, and indeed he may well have felt disheartened at not having been able to follow a more conventional political path. However, it is important not to overstate these personal sentiments at the risk of downplaying the coherence of his intellectual journey. This chapter will discuss Tone's interpretation of events in the final years of his life, up until his death on 19 November 1798. It will build upon the argument of the overall thesis that ancient republicanism shaped Tone's hopes of establishing an Irish republic, as he sought to organise a rebellion which polarised virtuous citizens against tyrannical government. Such an ambition was particularly evident in his late writings, which emphasised self-sacrifice and duty as he faced up to his impending execution. Indeed, there are echoes in his writings of Cicero, on the moral responsibility of government, and of Polybius in his views on the inherent instability of democratic regimes.⁷³⁵

Remembering the Year of the French: Irish Folk History and Social Memory; Tom Dunne, *Rebellions: Memoir, Memory and 1798* (Dublin: Lilliput, 2010). Thomas Pakenham, *The Year of Liberty: The Great Irish Rebellion of 1798* (London: Times Books, 1969). For a rare French perspective of 1798, see: Sylvie Kleinman, "Initiating Insurgencies Abroad: French Plans to 'Chouannise' Britain and Ireland, 1793-1798," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 25, no. 4 (July 4, 2014): 784-99.

⁷³² Tone, *Life*, 51.

⁷³³ Elliott, *Wolfe Tone*; Boylan, *Wolfe Tone*.

⁷³⁴ Dunne, *Colonial Outsider*, 50.

⁷³⁵ Arthur M. Eckstein, "Polybius and 'Machiavellianism,'" in *Moral Vision in the Histories of Polybius* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 16-28. Polybius had sought to analyse the Roman Republic from the vantage point of the Greek Hellenistic period.

Tone's final speech, given in front of a court martial before being convicted of treason, will also be used to provide a window into his attitudes towards how the rebellion transpired, especially in light of his prior comments against violence. Much of Tone's late commentary appeared to reflect his lifelong political obsessions rather than the realities of Ireland's social and religious dynamics. His anti-sectarian message is reiterated consistently throughout his pamphlets and diaries over the course of several years, yet the rebellion could hardly be characterized as unambiguously anti-sectarian.⁷³⁶ With Tone's ideas of particular interest in the context of 1798, this chapter will therefore discuss the later stages of his life and the conclusions that can be drawn about his republican interpretation in these final years. Discussing this period of his life helps to contextualise his political thought by the time of the 1798 rebellion, the event with which he has been so heavily associated.

Preparing for rebellion

Two key stages of Tone's preparations will be considered – the first, his spell in the Batavian Republic (from April 1797), and secondly, his time in Paris. He first went to Paris in early 1796 but returned on several occasions as part of his European travels. Tone envisaged a popular rising, but one which would be abetted by a well-organised military unit, contrary to what he found in the Batavian Republic. His time there also honed his ideas on certain constitutional questions, such as the relationship between the state and the clergy, which he believed should be one of mutual independence. Likewise, in this period in exile (post-1796), he also began to consolidate his ideas on the freedom of the press, which he felt should not be allowed to mount attacks on governments that were chosen by the people. Thus, while the last two years of his exile did not significantly reshape his broader political outlook, they did push him to develop more complex and nuanced views on some of the specific issues which would affect a post-revolutionary Irish society.

Day to day, Tone spent a significant portion of his time in coffee houses, or drinking wine, mixing in circles with other radicals in Paris. In his northern European travels, he was more productively engaged, serving in the French army. The sources from this period of his life are somewhat piecemeal, though it is possible to speculate that some of them have not survived. While he wrote relatively often, it was typically concerning private matters. Between January and December of 1797, for instance, there are just 29 diary entries, and some of these were done in arrears. He also made few

⁷³⁶ Tone's anti-sectarianism can be found, for example, in: Tone, *Life*, 51–52; Wolfe Tone, "On the Necessity of Domestic Union"; Tone, "An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland". Though 1798 began as a primarily Presbyterian rising with increasing numbers of Catholics becoming involved, in some parts of the north, the Catholic Defenders declined to assist and the rising was marred by sectarian disputes: Kyle Madden, *Forkhill Protestants and Forkhill Catholics, 1787-1858* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 2005), 41; Daniel Gahan, *Rebellion! Ireland in 1798*, 22–24.

comments on his time in the Rhine, or Cologne, though this reinforces the idea that Paris and the Batavian Republic were of more significance to him personally.

Tone's diaries between the end of 1796 and 1797 reveal his attempts to secure foreign backing for a rebellion. Between the start of 1797 and May 1798, when the uprisings began, he wrote most often to his wife Matilda – there are 29 records of correspondence between them – with the Generals Daendels (16) and Hoche (8) the next most frequent recipients. The first evidence of any correspondence with any of the rebels involved in the rebellion is found in two April 1798 letters to his brother Matthew Tone (1768-1798), who was still in France and not yet back in Ireland.⁷³⁷ Tone appears to have been relatively cut off from the United Irish leadership, instead corresponding with Hoche, Bonaparte, and Daendels. Many of these letters reflect his fascination with their respective military operations, which may also be attributed to his time in the French army and its example of the citizen-soldier, fitting the classical model.⁷³⁸ One limitation of Tone's correspondence with military figures is that he seems more concerned with the practicalities of co-ordinating a rising than with theorizing about republican rebellion, though there are still a number of clear signs of how he engaged with contemporary and historical republican ideas.

Tone in the Batavian Republic:

Hoche had retained Tone's services in the French army in early 1797 and as his own headquarters moved to the Rhine, so did Tone. Finding himself in the Batavian Republic in April 1797, it began to dawn on Tone that Dutch forces would not provide a possibility of diverging from his original hopes of French assistance. It appears that he travelled relatively extensively, including to the Hague, Amsterdam, Utrecht, and Groningen. While there was certainly a unique, Dutch tradition of republicanism upon which to draw, Tone considered it had been superseded by the young French republic.⁷³⁹ The first suggestions of this can be found in his diary entry from 21 April 1797, just a

⁷³⁷ Wolfe Tone, "Letter to Matthew Tone," April 23, 1798, Tone (Dickason) papers, Trinity College Dublin; Wolfe Tone, "Letter to Matthew Tone," April 12, 1798, Tone (Dickason) papers, Trinity College Dublin. Matthew Tone had arrived in France in August 1794, but was accused of being a British spy with the two countries at war. This led to a spell in prison at Dunkirk before he was eventually released in mid-1795.

⁷³⁸ The reintroduction of ancient ideas about the links between republican virtue and the military back into European political thought was thanks, in large part, to Machiavelli. On the revival of Machiavellian thought in European republicanism, see: John W. Danford and Paul A. Rahe, "Getting Our Bearings: Machiavelli and Hume," in *Machiavelli's Liberal Republican Legacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 102; Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*, 200–203; Jonathan Scott, "Radical Renaissance (2): Republican Moral Philosophy and the Politics of Settlement," in *England's Troubles: Seventeenth-Century English Political Instability in European Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 317–42.

⁷³⁹ In his chapter *The Dutch Republic and the Idea of Freedom*, Herbert H. Rowen argues that for much of the eighteenth century, it was seen as "the home of liberty", a freedom which in itself was "inextricably associated with the republican character of their government". Herbert H. Rowen, "The Dutch Republic and the Idea of

couple of months before he ventured to the Hague with Hoche. Having been unimpressed by his experience of Dutch troops, he noted “the French plan is better in all respects”.⁷⁴⁰ France, as the more powerful military state, provided a more realistic support base. During this period, Tone kept up with current affairs in Britain and Ireland via English newspapers found in coffee-houses, a method he was largely reliant on given that he seems to have received few letters. In the actions of General Lake, who had been commanding British forces in Ulster since December 1796, he saw a “tyranny exercised over the people of the north”, Lake having ordered the people of the province to surrender privately-held weapons, consequently having a significant impact on United Irish activity in the province.⁷⁴¹ This British crackdown on radical activity was relatively successful, though Tone may not have realised this from his contacts. His diary entry from 25 April 1797 reveals his pleasure to hear that “several United Irishmen, whose names are however not mentioned, have been acquitted”.⁷⁴² As examined in Chapter Two, the wider clampdown on radicalism in the mid-1790s had a significant impact on the movement and would prove to be a factor in the rebellion’s ultimate failure in 1798, due to the United Irishmen’s weakened organisation.

Tone’s assessment of Dutch political arrangements was informed not only by his experiences in France, but also in Ireland and America. One of the constitutional questions of most interest to him was “whether the Dutch people should or should not be obliged by the Constitution to pay the clergy”.⁷⁴³ Having been so recently in France and America, two very different societies in terms of the role of religion, he noted that “in France, where there is no religion, there is no salary settled by law for the priests,” whereas “in America, where there is a great deal of religion, there is no salary settled by law for the clergy”. Furthermore, in Ireland, “the voluntary subscriptions of their hearers” paid for Catholic priests and Dissenting ministers. That was not strictly true, as Presbyterian members of the clergy did in fact receive a ‘Regium Donum’, a yearly payment to supplement their income brought about by William III as a reward for their loyalty to the crown during the war of 1690 and not rescinded thereafter.⁷⁴⁴ In any case, Tone took the view that payment of the clergy was not a matter for government and that the two should be separate, a factor in the conspicuous absence of religion in his plans for a new Ireland. This was consistent with his previous work for the Catholic Committee, where he had argued against Ireland’s majority Catholic population having to pay tax to support a Church to which they did not adhere. It is noteworthy, nevertheless, that he discusses it again in 1797,

Freedom,” in *Republicanism, Liberty, and Commercial Society, 1649-1776*, ed. David Wootton (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 310.

⁷⁴⁰ Wolfe Tone, “Diary Entry,” April 21, 1797, Tone papers, MS 2049, f. 225, Trinity College Dublin. This passage is not included in the 1826 printing of Tone’s *Life*.

⁷⁴¹ Wolfe Tone, “Diary Entry,” April 27, 1797, Tone papers, MS 2049, f. 235, Trinity College Dublin.

⁷⁴² Wolfe Tone, “Diary Entry,” April 25, 1797, Tone papers, MS 2049, f. 229, Trinity College Dublin.

⁷⁴³ Tone, “Diary Entry,” April 27, 1797.

⁷⁴⁴ Hayton, *Ruling Ireland*, 93; David Hayton, *The Anglo-Irish Experience, 1680-1730: Religion, Identity and Patriotism* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2012), 108.

which suggests it was brought to his attention again by the corresponding situation in the Batavian Republic.

By advocating no state religion – and these comments were likely sincere because found in his private diaries – Tone’s view was closer to the French example, as churches were being closed down from 1794 onwards. He must have been conscious of how this would relate to Irish Catholics, who were burdened with paying tithes to a church to which they did not subscribe.⁷⁴⁵ There was less need for religion to be used as a guiding force, when nations ought to be guided by “all sense of virtue, principle, or even common decency”.⁷⁴⁶ In considering the Dutch example, Tone concluded that a more civic notion of virtue was a more potent force in society than state-imposed religious morality.

While in northern Europe, Tone maintained an interest in French newspapers. His views on the freedom of the press had changed as a result of his experiences in Europe. In his first comment on the subject, back in his 1790 *Review of the Conduct of Administration*, he supposed that if “any good citizen was to plant himself on the sacred ground of the liberty of the press”, it could be used to oppose corrupt administrations, whose own “restrictions on the press, would lend themselves to tyranny”.⁷⁴⁷ Thus, to begin with he was clearly favouring freedom of the press. However, by 1797, after reading a French royalist publication, he was scandalised by “the indecent attacks that are made with impunity on the Government”.⁷⁴⁸ Consideration of press freedom, and how it related to government, became more evident in his private diaries and public writings at this stage of his life. When the government truly represented the people, criticism of that government amounted to a “scandalous and abominable” attack on the people themselves.⁷⁴⁹ In this regard, Tone’s views were in line with the authoritarian measures of the Thermidorian Convention who, following the fall of the Jacobins, had used their Constitution of the Year III (1795) – the constitution most immediately preceding Tone’s arrival in France – to place “just limits” on the power of the press so long as the Revolutionary Government remained in charge.⁷⁵⁰

⁷⁴⁵ Karen Sonnelitter, “‘The Worst in Christendom’: The Church of Ireland and Improvement,” in *Charity Movements in Eighteenth-Century Ireland: Philanthropy and Improvement* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2016), 25–47.

⁷⁴⁶ Tone, “Diary Entry,” April 27, 1797.

⁷⁴⁷ Wolfe Tone, “A Review of the Conduct of Administration during the Seventh Session of Parliament-Addressed to the Constitutional Electors and Free People of Ireland, on the Approaching Dissolution,” 26–49.

⁷⁴⁸ Wolfe Tone, “Diary Entry,” April 27, 1797, Tone papers, MS 2049, f. 235, Trinity College Dublin.

⁷⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁰ M.A. Kennedy and Michael L. Kennedy, *The Jacobin Clubs in the French Revolution, 1793-1795* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2000), 244.

Tone reiterates in the same diary entry from April 1797 that “in the only government emanating from the choice of the people, liberty should be made the instrument of her own destruction”.⁷⁵¹ Whereas in his *Review* (1790), he had argued for press freedom, he did not accept that this had been achieved in Britain. The British government had overseen a severe clampdown on radical publications, including the suppression of the *Northern Star* in Ireland, which then ceased publication. Even after his time in France, Tone did not advocate limiting the press entirely. Yet he did hold that censorship should have a place in democratic society. Press freedom, he argued, should be restrained “within just and reasonable limits”, and if Ireland’s rebellion were to be successful, its new government should not be undermined, so long as it was “properly organised and freely and frequently chosen by the people”.⁷⁵² In the same diary entry, he added that it was in fact, “the interest and the security of the people themselves”, that the “government which they have chosen should not be insulted with impunity”. Thus, while the treatment of the *Northern Star* was “tyrannous and unjust”, the same laws which saw its suppression Tone “would in a free republic preserve and even strengthen” for a government worth protecting.

His diaries from 1797 add further weight to the idea that he took his views from a range of sources which were not always predictable. Voltaire, the obvious source on press freedom, receives limited attention in Tone’s memoirs at this time. Returning to an inn on his travels, he cites Voltaire’s humorous advice, “*Ou bien buvez; c’est un parti fort sage*” [Or else, drink, that’s a very wise choice], while between May 3rd-6th, he was impressed with a theatre company’s “translation of Voltaire’s *Mérope*”, his Greek tragedy.⁷⁵³ There are no other direct citations of Voltaire. These fleeting references show Tone was familiar with his work, but he did not appear to borrow from his ideas about press freedom. Neither did Tone appear to have been impressed by eighteenth-century writers’ praise for Britain’s famed freedom of the press.⁷⁵⁴ However, by the 1790s, this glowing consensus was being undermined by the suppression of radical publications, hence Tone viewing Britain as a negative example. Once again, therefore, Tone emerges as an independent thinker positioned at the margins of mainstream discussions – and one who unwittingly placed himself in line with a more authoritarian brand of eighteenth-century republicanism, which in fact bore some resemblance to Jacobinism. This shift appears to have come as a result of his time in France, where he had encountered a more authoritarian way of dealing with the press even compared to what he had experienced in Britain and Ireland. Though he generally took little from his time in France in terms of

⁷⁵¹ Tone, “Diary Entry,” April 27, 1797.

⁷⁵² Ibid.

⁷⁵³ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁴ Hume, for example, had argued that Britain’s mixed constitution had allowed for greater liberty in terms of press freedom. David Hume, “Of the Liberty of the Press (1741),” in *Hume: Political Essays*, ed. Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

his political philosophy, this was one exception.

Thus, Tone moved away from his initial views that clamping down on the freedom of the press would lend itself to tyranny, by restricting the validity of the claim to monarchic societies only. It is also worth considering his wider views on tyranny at this point of his life. There was a long tradition of opposing monarchic tyranny in Britain, for example. Milton had contended that monarchy would always have a tendency to stray towards tyranny, best understood as the corruption of virtuous governance.⁷⁵⁵ As Hobbes had put it, this was an inevitable consequence of “a perpetual and restless desire of power after power”.⁷⁵⁶ Milton’s Satan is a clear example as he exerts authority over hell and seeks to expand his power further, in “transcendent glory rais’d above his fellows, with Monarchal pride”.⁷⁵⁷ In an apparent reference to the trials of high-profile radicals in England during the mid-1790s, which he described as a “mockery of justice”, Tone expressed the view that the monarchy was responsible for the corruption of the entire state apparatus.⁷⁵⁸ In this April 1797 diary entry, he added that “the King names the judges and the sheriffs, because the sheriffs pack the jury”. The King’s role in these processes may have been overstated here in this entry, but it serves Tone’s point that it led to a system which “in practical execution it is tyrannical, and as I have already said, I do not see why tyrants alone should be protected by the laws”.⁷⁵⁹ Tyranny was, in essence, the corruption of oligarchy, according to Aristotle’s six-fold types of government, and was brought about, inevitably, by tyrants.⁷⁶⁰ There were contrasting examples in ancient republicanism of monarchies not necessarily being viewed as tyrannical, instead dependent on the individual leader. Montesquieu, for example, praised the English aristocracy as a buffer between monarchy and tyranny.⁷⁶¹ As we have seen, though, Tone progressed towards the former view having initially defended the role of the Crown in his earlier writings.⁷⁶²

⁷⁵⁵ Walter S. H. Lim, *John Milton, Radical Politics, and Biblical Republicanism* (University of Delaware Press, 2006), 47–48; Michael Bryson, “‘His Tyranny Who Reigns’: The Biblical Roots of Divine Kingship and Milton’s Rejection of ‘Heav’n’s King’ in Prose and Poetry,” in *The Tyranny of Heaven: Milton’s Rejection of God as King* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004), 42–77.

⁷⁵⁶ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan: With Selected Variants from the Latin Edition of 1668*, ed. Edwin M. Curley (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1994), 58.

⁷⁵⁷ Walter S. H. Lim, “Authority in the Ideal Republic: Milton, National Identity, and the Negotiations of Political Authority,” in *John Milton, Radical Politics, and Biblical Republicanism*, 71–126; John Milton, *Paradise Lost* (1667), ed. Merritt Yerkes Hughes (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2003), 42; Volkan Kilic, *Milton’s Political Ideas and Paradise Lost as a Political Allegory* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018), 79–80.

⁷⁵⁸ Tone, “Diary Entry,” April 27, 1797.

⁷⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁰ Josiah Ober, “Aristotle’s Natural Democracy,” in *Aristotle’s Politics: Critical Essays*, ed. Richard Kraut and Steven Skultety (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 223–45.

⁷⁶¹ Mark Hulliung, *Montesquieu and the Old Regime* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 47.

⁷⁶² J.G.A. Pocock discusses the equation of monarchy as tyranny in the context of Caesarian rule, linking these perceptions to the rehabilitation of Brutus in republican thinking. J.G.A. Pocock, “Value and History in the Prerevolutionary Atlantic,” in *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*, 52.

In addition to the monarchy, individual citizens were capable of corrupting the nation too, via luxury. During Tone's time in the Hague in July 1797, upon learning that the French government was now prepared to sanction a three-month, 15,000-man expedition to Ireland, he reflected once again that Ireland's "necessity for a revolution" had been caused by "the luxury of the rich and the extreme misery of the poor".⁷⁶³ This was a clear elaboration on the classical republican opposition to indulgence, which deterred citizens from fulfilling their duty and in this case, Tone implies, inflicting "misery" on the masses. There was an enormous background to the idea, as Tone put it in the summer of 1797, that poverty was "honorable".⁷⁶⁴ In the eighteenth century, it had perhaps been most famously theorised by Montesquieu, who had argued in *Spirit of the Laws* (1748) that modern European monarchies were threatened with the corrupting influence of luxury. Indeed, Montesquieu had said that "so far as luxury is established in a republic, so far does the spirit turn to the interest of the individual".⁷⁶⁵

In order to remain uncorrupted, therefore, citizens ought only to possess what was essential, lest they be deterred from sacrificing themselves for the nation. Tone's admiration was reserved, therefore, for officers such as the Dutch General Daendels, who was "as brave as Caesar".⁷⁶⁶ In the same way, in ancient Rome, soldiers were initially required to pay for their own equipment – hence why only those with property could serve – but this would eventually change as the system moved towards financial rewards and the creation of mercenaries.⁷⁶⁷ "For people who have to have nothing but the necessities, there is left to desire only the glory of the homeland and one's own glory," Montesquieu added.⁷⁶⁸ "But a soul corrupted by luxury has many other desires; soon it becomes an enemy of the laws that hamper it. As soon as the Romans were corrupted, their desires became immense." Scottish thinker Adam Ferguson gave one of the best summaries of how luxury was thought about in the eighteenth century, his *Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767) citing its "moral effects", associating it with monarchical societies and arguably it was thereby incompatible with democracy, with Tone's message typical of these ideas.⁷⁶⁹

⁷⁶³ Wolfe Tone, "Diary," June 12 - July 14, 1797, Tone papers, MS 2049, f. 244, Trinity College Dublin. Exact dates of entries are not specified.

⁷⁶⁴ Tone, "Diary," June 12-July 14, 1797

⁷⁶⁵ Montesquieu, *Montesquieu: The Spirit of the Laws*, 98.

⁷⁶⁶ Tone, "Diary," June 12-July 14, 1797

⁷⁶⁷ Boris Rankov, "Military Forces," in *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare*, ed. Philip Sabin, Hans van Wees, and Michael Whitby, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 58.

⁷⁶⁸ Charles de Secondat baron de Montesquieu, "Consequences of the Different Principles of the Three Governments in Relation to Sumptuary Laws, Luxury, and the Condition of Women," in *The Spirit of the Laws*, 96–112.

⁷⁶⁹ Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767), 2nd ed. (London: A. Millar and T. Cadell, 1768), 415. Ian McDaniel, *Adam Ferguson in the Scottish Enlightenment: The Roman Past and Europe's Future*, 2013.

If Tone was mulling over republics' tendencies to fall into tyranny and corruption, it was because the question of the character of Ireland's post-revolutionary society was becoming urgent, as Hoche still envisaged an invasion taking place within the month, during the summer of 1797. Tone had been alarmed by the manner of other French invasions, having read newspaper reports of Bonaparte's address to the government of Genoa, which he found "most grossly improper and indecent, as trenching on the indispensable rights of the people".⁷⁷⁰ Genoa had been provided with French assistance for several decades, but what Tone objected to was a letter published in the *Moniteur* on 27 June, 1797, on Bonaparte's behalf, instructing that a provisional government be installed in Genoa.⁷⁷¹ "If Buonaparte [sic] commanded in Ireland and were to publish so indiscreet a proclamation as that," Tone warned "it would have the most ruinous effects; that in Italy, such diction might pass, but never in Ireland," a place where "we understood our rights too well to submit to it".⁷⁷² French aid in terms of "troops, arms and money necessary" would assist the Irish people to "assert their liberty", Tone recalls from a meeting with Hoche and a man referred to as "Lewines", a representative from Ireland.⁷⁷³ Thus, it would be regular citizens who would be establishing an independent state, one which Tone feared could be subjugated by French troops. Herein lies another suggestion that he was cautious of accepting French republicanism, and its supposed universalism, as beneficial to Ireland, perhaps wisely so given France's hegemonic advances elsewhere. He therefore only sought their assistance as a means to an end, not because he wanted to replicate the French model.

The information Tone received while on his travels in France and the Batavian Republic was not always accurate and as a result, some of his analyses of developments in Ireland were built on uncertain factual grounds. For example, in mid-1797, on the basis of some fairly early signs of insurrection, Tone wrote in his memoirs that the rebels back in Ireland had been on the verge of taking the whole capital, "and by seizing the persons of half a dozen individuals they would have paralysed the whole government, and in my opinion, accomplished the whole revolution by a single proclamation".⁷⁷⁴ At that stage, the United Irishmen were, in reality, facing considerable challenges, with steps being taken to clamp down on unrest, such as thousands of weapons being seized in the north to stop the Society from distributing them.⁷⁷⁵ Nevertheless, his responses to these events shaped his ideas about rebellion. Whereas before, Tone was keen to emphasise the concept of rebellion as a

⁷⁷⁰ Tone.

⁷⁷¹ "Gazette Nationale Ou Le Moniteur Universel: Politique Italie: De Gènes," June 27, 1797, Napoleonic Collections, Le Moniteur universel, Florida State University Digital Repository, <https://fsu.digital.flvc.org/islandora/object/fsu%3A377954#page/Page+1/mode/2up>.

⁷⁷² Tone, "Diary," June 12-July 14, 1797

⁷⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁷⁴ Tone, *Life*, 240.

⁷⁷⁵ The situation in the north in the summer of 1797 is described more thoroughly in: Lecky, *A History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century*, 100.

civic duty, he later admitted in a letter to Matilda in August 1797 he would only “hazard my life with pleasure for her [Ireland’s] independence so long as I saw a shadow of a possibility of success”.⁷⁷⁶ Instead, going into exile would be an act of self-sacrifice in itself, as “neither as to many of us, would the passage be open for us to return”.⁷⁷⁷

Just a few months after these comments in his letter to his wife Matilda, he showed support for an expedition to Scotland in his correspondence with first, General Hermann Wilhelm Daendels, and then to General Bonaparte, in November 1797.⁷⁷⁸ This was notable in that he had previously stopped short of any wholesale acceptance of French universalism – or at least French imperialism in a universalist guise, as it was widely viewed from the mid-1790s for the rest of the decade.⁷⁷⁹

He told Daendels of a “revolutionary spirit” in Glasgow and Paisley. This is one occasion that supports C. Desmond Greaves’s narrative, which is generally somewhat anachronistic, that Tone’s republicanism was sensitive to class struggle.⁷⁸⁰ Tone felt this revolutionary atmosphere had come about due to the “distress and misery produced among the working class by the suspension, or at least the great diminution of these labors [sic] which furnished them with the means of living”.⁷⁸¹ It was a viewpoint he may have taken from Scottish writers within Scotland itself, especially as there were regular communications between the United Irishmen in the north of Ireland and radicals in Scotland.⁷⁸² Among their shared grievances were “a general enlistment of the militia in Scotland”, massacres of peasants, and “English domination”.⁷⁸³ For the second time, he referenced the “revolutionary spirit” there and intimated that it had come to Scotland “several times since the establishment of the French Republic”, an attempt, if nothing more, to convince the General of the merits of universal republicanism.⁷⁸⁴

Tone’s time in the Batavian Republic appears to have indirectly confirmed his commitment to French assistance, a point of interest given that this would be, in essence, his contribution to the 1798 rebellion. Scholars have, on the whole, paid little attention to his time in the Batavian Republic, but it was a spell

⁷⁷⁶ Wolfe Tone, “Letter to Matilda Tone,” August 31, 1797, Tone (Dickason) papers, Trinity College Dublin.

⁷⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁷⁸ Wolfe Tone, “Letter to General Hermann Wilhelm Daendels,” November 4, 1797, Tone (Dickason) papers, Trinity College Dublin; Wolfe Tone, “Letter to General Napoleon Bonaparte,” November 12, 1797, Tone Papers, MS 2050, f. 18, Trinity College Dublin.

⁷⁷⁹ Alice L. Conklin, “The Civilizing Mission,” in *The French Republic: History, Values, Debates* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 173–82; Jeremy Jennings, “Universalism,” in *The French Republic: History, Values, Debates*, 145–54.

⁷⁸⁰ Greaves, *Theobald Wolfe Tone and the Irish Nation*.

⁷⁸¹ Tone, “Letter to General Hermann Wilhelm Daendels.”

⁷⁸² Elaine W. McFarland, *Ireland and Scotland in the Age of Revolution: Planting the Green Bough* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), 97–98.

⁷⁸³ Tone, “Letter to General Hermann Wilhelm Daendels.”

⁷⁸⁴ Ibid.

that reinforced some crucial convictions, such as his commitment to utilising French rather than Dutch aid, and one which allowed him to reflect on other constitutional questions such as the relationship between church and state and moreover, the freedom of the press.⁷⁸⁵ All these debates were framed for Tone through the lens of republican views on concepts such as tyranny, luxury, and virtue.

Tone in Paris:

It was always the aim of the Tone family to return to France. Matilda and their children too, were in exile but were not following him on his various travels. After America, whereas Tone went to France, his wife arrived in Hamburg. Her plans suffered some disruption due to ill health, which prevented her from travelling at some point in 1797. From Paris, Tone felt better placed to direct plans for an invasion. Both before and after his travels in and out of France, he had a number of significant encounters, firstly with Paine and later, upon his return, with Napoleon. That he was keen to set up these meetings is further evidence of his aspiration to mix in high-profile or intellectual circles, even if he found fault with both men.

It is likely Tone's meeting with Paine took place thanks to James Monroe, American ambassador in Paris, who knew them both, and who was told of Tone's arrival in the city following his departure from America by John Beckley, first clerk of the United States house of representatives.⁷⁸⁶ Tone recounted the meeting in a diary entry of 3 March 1797.⁷⁸⁷ Nevertheless, this appears more a meeting of like minds than an event which challenged Tone's ideas. There were certainly points on which the two diverged, Tone describing him as "vain beyond all belief" due to his "wonders for the cause of liberty, both in America and Europe".⁷⁸⁸ For example, Paine read to Tone extracts of his reply to the Bishop of Landaff, Richard Watson, who had written *An Apology for the Bible* in response to Paine's *Age of Reason*.⁷⁸⁹ In a series of ten letters, Watson had picked apart Paine's attack on the Bible's alleged historical inaccuracy regarding the authorship of its various books. Paine had advocated a form of Deism based on the appreciation of creation. Paine, Tone noted, "seems to plume himself more on his theology than his politics, in which I am not prepared to agree with him, whatever my

⁷⁸⁵ See, however, Elliott, who does discuss it at more length though not with the purpose of discussing his ideas. Elliott, *Partners in Revolution: The United Irishmen and France*.

⁷⁸⁶ John Beckley, "Letter from John Beckley to James Monroe," December 14, 1795, Monroe papers, New York Public Library. Monroe's correspondence with Paine from these years is published in: Stanislaus Murray Hamilton, *The Writings of James Monroe, 1824-1831*, vol. 7 (G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1903), 294.

⁷⁸⁷ Wolfe Tone, "Diary Entry," March 3, 1797, Tone papers, MS 2049, f. 210, Trinity College Dublin.

⁷⁸⁸ Tone.

⁷⁸⁹ Richard Watson, *An Apology for the Bible - In a Series of Letters, Addressed to T. Paine, Author of a Book Entitled, "The Age of Reason, Part the Second". Being an Investigation of True and of Fabulous Theology* (London: A. Edwards, 1796).

private opinion of the Christian religion may be”.⁷⁹⁰ Religious debates were evidently of much less significance to Tone who, unlike many thinkers of the late eighteenth century, did not overtly emphasise the need for religious belief to be rational. This represented a clear point of divergence between Tone and the French sceptical Enlightenment and the subsequent direction of the French Revolution. In spite of these differences, Tone contrasted his meeting with Paine with some of his other associations in Paris, namely with other Irishmen whom he described as “sad vulgar wretches, and I have been used to rather better company in all respects”.⁷⁹¹

Likewise, Tone viewed his meetings with Napoleon Bonaparte in early 1798 in much the same way, viewing the encounters as a social affair without reflecting much on the political significance of these meetings. As Elliott notes, he reserved special admiration for French generals, especially Hoche.⁷⁹² As a consequence, Tone was particularly disappointed by his failure to convince Bonaparte of his plans for an expedition, as the general was far less enthusiastic about the Irish project than Hoche had been. Hoche was an admirer, but also a great rival of Bonaparte’s and as such, his death had implications beyond the internal politics of the French generals.⁷⁹³ The two generals had been competing in a fiercely competitive environment in the French military, even if they rarely met; dating back to the time when Bonaparte was commanding in Italy in 1797, both had been striving for influence over the Directory and Boylan suggests in his biography of Tone, their rivalry spurred each other on in their respective military campaigns.⁷⁹⁴ As far as Tone was concerned, Hoche’s death in September 1797 proved a significant obstacle to any realistic hopes of meaningful French aid in the forthcoming rebellion. Elliott even contends that because the two generals shared such a rivalry, Hoche resented Tone seeking Bonaparte’s aid and this made him all the keener to promote the Irish invasion - though this comes with a note of caution not to over-emphasise that point.⁷⁹⁵

Since Tone was keen to use these connections to facilitate a French-supported rebellion, on 12 November, 1797, he wrote to Bonaparte, who was at that time in command of the ‘army of England’ - a force stationed close to the Channel amid considerations to invade England.⁷⁹⁶ Under his alias ‘James Smith’, which he often used during his time in France, Tone offered his services to Bonaparte’s forces. He also corresponded with General Louis Alexandre Berthier on the same day

⁷⁹⁰ Tone, “Diary Entry,” March 3, 1797.

⁷⁹¹ Ibid.

⁷⁹² Elliott, *Wolfe Tone*, 303.

⁷⁹³ Steven Englund, *Napoleon: A Political Life* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Simon and Schuster, 2010), 90–91, 121–22.

⁷⁹⁴ Darrell Pierce Morse, *Napoleon, the Bourgeoisie, and the Steps Leading to Overthrow of the First French Republic, 1795-1797* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1953), 63; Boylan, *Wolfe Tone*, 114.

⁷⁹⁵ Elliott, *Wolfe Tone*, 303.

⁷⁹⁶ Tone, “Letter to General Napoleon Bonaparte.”

asking him to forward a letter to General Bonaparte, which implies he considered it a matter of some importance.⁷⁹⁷ Tone was mistaken in his belief that Bonaparte would prioritise campaigns in Britain and Ireland in the immediate future. On 21 December 1797, he recounted his first impressions of Bonaparte, which were not entirely favourable:

He is about five feet six inches high, slender and well made, but stoops considerably. He looks at least ten years older than he is, owing to the great fatigue he underwent in his immortal campaign of Italy. His face is that of a profound thinker, but with no marks of that great enthusiasm [sic] and that unceasing activity by which he is so much distinguished; it is rather to my mind the countenance of a mathematician than of a general...so much for his figure and manner.⁷⁹⁸

Immediately apparent is that Tone was struck by the fact Bonaparte did not physically embody a great soldier, hence there being “no marks” of his prestige upon him, but he was keen to recall his impressive campaigns which made the general so “distinguished”, particularly his role in Italy. Tone enjoyed associating with such a famed figure, but quickly became disenchanted after finding Bonaparte unable to muster much interest in Irish affairs and focused instead on military campaigns in central and southern Europe.⁷⁹⁹ Left to his own devices and in Hoche’s absence, Bonaparte’s interest in Britain and Ireland was, at this stage, limited and he preferred to focus his efforts on Austria and, by the time the 1798 rising began, Egypt.⁸⁰⁰

Before his encounter with Bonaparte, Tone erroneously believed he had the power to sway the French military towards intervention in Ireland, as he had done in the recent past. This was despite occupying an ultimately minimal role in the army and holding little political influence at home. That Bonaparte, for whom Tone had so much admiration, remained unconvinced was to prove a dent to his self-image. This was, after all, a man who lamented in his diaries on his thirty-third birthday that at the same age “Alexander had conquered the world”, compared to his own minor achievements, despite having “as good disposition for glory”.⁸⁰¹ Tone recalled that he had given Bonaparte a copy of his *First Memorial to the French Government on the Present State of Ireland* (1796), in response to which he was “perfectly civil however to us, but from anything we have yet seen or heard from him, it is

⁷⁹⁷ Wolfe Tone, “Letter to General Louis Alexandre Berthier,” November 12, 1797, Tone Papers, MS 2050, f. 19, Trinity College Dublin.

⁷⁹⁸ Tone, *Life*, 454.

⁷⁹⁹ Gustav Joseph Fiebeger, *The Campaigns of Napoleon Bonaparte of 1796-1797 Against Austria and Sardinia in Italy* (Trieste: Leonaur Limited, 2010), 1–15.

⁸⁰⁰ For a summary of Bonaparte’s preparations for the Egypt invasion, see: Juan Cole, *Napoleon’s Egypt: Invading the Middle East* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2007), 2–21.

⁸⁰¹ Tone, *Life*, 129.

impossible to augur anything good or bad.”⁸⁰² It was frustrating to inspire so little response, not least because it damaged the way Tone perceived himself, something which was being built partly on the excitement of mixing with senior military figures. By December, he had met “the greatest man in Europe three times, and I am astonished to think how little I have to record about him”.⁸⁰³ Yet he also claimed he was “now a little used to see great men, and great statesmen, and great generals and that has in some degree broke down my admiration”, though he still considered it “droll that I should become acquainted with Buonaparte”.⁸⁰⁴

His view of Napoleon would be shaped further by the French occupation of Rome under Pius VI in February 1798, with General Louis-Alexandre Berthier – to whom Tone had written the previous year – proclaiming a Roman Republic.⁸⁰⁵ The onlooking Irishman described the event as “of a magnitude scarce, if at all, inferior in importance to that of the French Revolution”.⁸⁰⁶ His interest was borne partly of his views against the institution of the Catholic Church, which were discussed in the context of his earlier writings – though not against ordinary Catholics, for whom he saw himself as an advocate – but were amplified by the possible implications of the Pope’s seemingly imminent downfall. Of the peace that Bonaparte had agreed with the Pope in February 1797, Tone argued, “many people thought at the time, and I was of the number, that it was unwise to let slip so favourable an opportunity to destroy forever the papal tyranny”.⁸⁰⁷ This is undoubtedly his fiercest comment against the papacy and unsurprisingly, it was omitted from William Tone’s *Life* edition. As radical as such a statement appeared, as Tone’s ideas against the institution of the Church hardened over time, the idea of the Pope’s downfall only confirmed his belief in a collective shift in consciousness that was transporting Europe away from tyrannical leadership, “a special providence guiding the affairs of Europe at this moment, and turning everything to the great end of the emancipation of mankind from the yoke of religious and political superstition under which they have so long groaned”.⁸⁰⁸ This reference to a “special providence” also hints at Tone’s belief in the concept of determinism – that events were directly caused by forces other than free will – still at that time a widely-held world view.⁸⁰⁹

⁸⁰² Wolfe Tone, “First Memorial to the French Government on the Present State of Ireland”. Tone, *Life*, 456.

⁸⁰³ Tone, *Life*, 456.

⁸⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁵ Susan Vandiver Nicassio, *Imperial City: Rome under Napoleon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 16–22; Edward James Kolla, *Sovereignty, International Law, and the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 238–50.

⁸⁰⁶ Tone, “Diary Entry,” March 1, 1798, f. 297.

⁸⁰⁷ Wolfe Tone, *Life of Theobald Wolfe Tone*, ed. Thomas Bartlett (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1998), 825.

⁸⁰⁸ Tone, “Diary Entry,” March 1, 1798, f. 297.

⁸⁰⁹ Jerome B. Schneewind, “The Active Powers,” in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Philosophy*, vol. 1–2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 557–608. Locke had also emphasised free will in his discussions of human agency, which naturally had moral implications. Vere Chappell, “Locke on the Freedom of the Will,” in *Locke’s Philosophy: Content and Context*, ed. G.A.J Rogers (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996),

Tone referred to the idea of “Providence”, which “for its own wise and great purposes, the happiness of man and the complete establishment of civil and religious liberty, seems to have utterly taken away all sense and understanding from the Pope”.⁸¹⁰ Though it is possible the term “providence” could be used as a figure of speech, it is far more likely that Tone would have been well acquainted with the concept because of his Irish Protestant upbringing.⁸¹¹ Moreover, it also had links to the republican tradition, especially to Machiavelli, who had begun to frame politics as directed by divine providence.⁸¹² These debates on the contrasting interpretations of determinism and free will naturally had repercussions for political liberty, and whether governments could be justified by rational law, as determined by God.⁸¹³ If Tone’s comment on “providence” is taken at face value, the passage provides a very rare occasion where Tone alludes to his own religious beliefs. An acceptance of providence seems to have fuelled Tone’s acceptance not of existing governments, but of the idea that European politics was on an inexorable march towards revolutionary change. This was epitomised by the second invasion of the papal states, which he referred to as a “second contest with the Republic” between Pope Pius VI and Berthier, following the former’s peace with Bonaparte. Tone’s embracing of ‘providence’ is striking, therefore, as his arguments, particularly those against the Catholic Church, were typically founded on secular logic rather than religious belief.

In light of these nuances in Tone’s ideas, the time he spent preparing for the 1798 rebellion in Paris and elsewhere in northern Europe should be seen as a significant moment in his political development. From a practical point of view, his meetings with Paine, Bonaparte and his correspondence with Hoche were also instrumental in this period of his life, given the role they played in better honing his plans for rebellion. It is in this period, upon his return to Paris, that some of his most notable views came into play, notably his hardening stance against state religion following the occupation of Rome under Pius VI and, perhaps paradoxically, his seeming lack of interest in the religious debates in which Paine was engaging.

101–23; James A. Harris, “Locke’s Chapter ‘Of Power’ and Its Eighteenth-Century Reception,” in *Of Liberty and Necessity: The Free Will Debate in Eighteenth-Century British Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 23–49.

⁸¹⁰ Tone, “Diary Entry”, March 1, 1798, f. 297.

⁸¹¹ That is not necessarily to say that Tone is definitely using the term in a theological context, but it renders it more likely that he would have understood the meaning behind his choice of language.

⁸¹² Miguel Vatter, “Machiavelli and the Republican Conception of Providence,” *The Review of Politics* 75, no. 4 (Autumn 2013): 605–23. Vatter does note that Machiavelli’s interpretation of providence may not necessarily have been framed by Christianity and could have been taken from Arabic or Jewish sources.

⁸¹³ Lim, “Authority in the Ideal Republic: Milton, National Identity, and the Negotiations of Political Authority.” Benjamin Myers, *Milton’s Theology of Freedom* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2012). Roy Weatherford, *The Implications of Determinism* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2017), 42–43.

The rebellion

For Tone, the real significance of the rebellion in Ireland lay in its opportunity to cement the ties between Irish citizens and the state, a means of separating the ‘good citizen’ from the treasonous, not dissimilar to what the Jacobins had advocated in the French Terror. Those such as the Protestant gentry who had refused to align themselves with the rebels had failed to act upon their duties, Tone portraying the insurrections of the summer of 1798 as a decisive battle against a tyrannical government. The rising represented an opportunity to establish a state founded upon republican values, though it also provided further insight into Tone’s legitimisation of armed struggle. While Ireland had been experiencing sporadic unrest in the earlier part of the year, this consolidated into something more tangible in March 1798. The United Irishmen hoped that the rebellion would be short-lived, and its aims would be achieved quickly. In Wicklow and many of the southern counties, fighting was characterised by guerrilla warfare, whereas in Down, Henry Munro’s forces enjoyed some success in a more organised campaign, before ultimately succumbing to defeat at the Battle of Ballynahinch. Rebels were also defeated at New Ross, Arklow, and Bunclody.⁸¹⁴

The French assistance that arrived in August under the leadership of General Jean Joseph Amable Humbert (1767-1823) was nowhere near in the numbers that Tone and Hoche had originally planned for.⁸¹⁵ The Directory had been unable to commit sufficient forces initially due to Bonaparte’s expedition to Egypt, instead sending three separate bit-part forces.⁸¹⁶ Tone had remained in France negotiating for this expedition while many of the key events of the rebellion in Ireland, as discussed above, were unfolding. Due to his isolation from the main operation and the delays in sending significant French forces – the first force that arrived had just 900 men – other members of the United Irishmen had all but given up on the prospect of French assistance.⁸¹⁷ As a consequence, the rebellion unfolded as an uncoordinated set of events. When the French expedition eventually landed in Ireland in August at Kilcummin in County Mayo, they established an unsuccessful ‘Irish Republic’ which, in spite of what its name might imply, was not a nationwide phenomenon and was in fact centred in the west. Having landed in Connacht, the province proved a poor choice of power base because of its lack of urban centres and its remote location making it difficult to reach. The small force, reliant on the aid of local peasants, lacked both numbers and supplies, the United Irish movement having been

⁸¹⁴ Gahan, *Rebellion! Ireland in 1798*, 156; Daniel Gahan, “New Ross, Scullabogue and the 1798 Rebellion in Southwestern Wexford,” *The Past: The Organ of the Uí Cinsealaigh Historical Society* 21 (January 1, 1998): 3–33; Daniel Gahan and Ruan O’Donnell, “The Rebellion in Wicklow, 1798,” *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 31, no. 3 (1999): 551.

⁸¹⁵ Beiner, *Remembering the Year of the French: Irish Folk History and Social Memory*, 139–87.

⁸¹⁶ Owen Connolly, *The French Revolution and Napoleonic Era* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1991), 191–92.

⁸¹⁷ Póirtéir, ed., *The Great Irish Rebellion of 1798*, 44.

especially weak in the west.⁸¹⁸ Their arrival also came too late in the course of the rebellion to have any real impact. Tone himself only reached Ireland in October 1798, alongside approximately 3,000 French soldiers attempting to land at Lough Swilly in Donegal. By then, British forces had reclaimed control and were waiting to intercept the ship when it docked. He was arrested and was briefly imprisoned in Derry before being taken to Dublin to be tried.

Between March and November of 1798, the most crucial months of fighting, Tone's correspondence with the United Irish leadership was extremely limited. On the evidence available, Tone's knowledge of events unfolding in Ireland was gained largely from newspapers. Tone was able to glean some information from a letter to Matilda from his brother Matthew, himself a participant in the rising, in August 1798.⁸¹⁹ Matthew Tone detailed the operation in County Mayo, which had taken in a French force of over 1000 men with over 6000 weapons. He elaborated on troubles with the weather but signed off with optimism, "we will be masters of Connaught in a few days. Erin go braugh. [Ireland forever]".⁸²⁰ The French General Jean Hardy, who arrived in Donegal with a larger force, had provided an address to the United Irishmen, dated 7 August 1798, which gave more alarmist details. It warned of scenes where they would find "your houses, your properties, wrapped in flames by your pitiless enemies", though it promised nonetheless that "your blood, shed for the sacred cause of Liberty, shall cement the independance [sic] of Ireland".⁸²¹ It seems likely, however, that this address may not have reached Tone, since it was intended for the United Irish leadership and would therefore have been directed to Ireland, where most of them were to be found.

The only element of the rising which was under Tone's control, therefore, was the organising of the French contingent. As a result, the bulk of his correspondence in the run-up to and during the rebellion was made up of letters to and from military officials, not to other United Irish leaders. Tone's connections with the military were wide-ranging. There are six letters to Daendels, six to General Barthélemy Louis Joseph Schérer, two to General Charles Joseph Kilmaine, and 14 to Adjutant-General Olivier Macoux Rivaud, one to General Emmanuel Grouchy, two to General Charles Joseph Kilmaine, and one to Admiral Eustache Bruix. In this period, he also wrote to Matilda 26 times and to Matthew Tone three times. Though Tone's garnering of French support was not

⁸¹⁸ Thomas E. Hachey and Lawrence J. McCaffrey, *The Irish Experience Since 1800: A Concise History* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 25; Jonathan I Israel, *The Expanding Blaze: How the American Revolution Ignited the World, 1775-1848* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 316–17; Beiner, *Remembering the Year of the French: Irish Folk History and Social Memory*, 8.

⁸¹⁹ There is little documentation relating to Matthew Tone. He was captured, tried by court-martial and hanged in the aftermath of the rebellion.

⁸²⁰ Matthew Tone, "Letter from Matthew Tone to Matilda Tone and Others," August 22, 1798, Sirr Papers, MS 872, Trinity College Dublin, f.148.

⁸²¹ Jean Hardy, "Address of General Jean Hardy to the United Irishmen," August 7, 1798, Tone (Dickason) papers, Trinity College Dublin.

enough to make the rebellion successful, it does help to explain why he subsequently retained a symbolic importance among the United Irishmen and in the rebellion because of this mission and because of his earlier leadership and role in founding of the organisation. Tone's prominence is also upheld in an account of the French expedition by government informant Michael Burke, and in the reports of his alleged treachery in the *Londonderry Journal*.⁸²²

While Tone's information on the rebellion's developments was only sporadic, his diary entries and private correspondence to Matilda and Matthew Tone are nonetheless illuminative of which parts of the rebellion he felt had stayed true to his original principles, and those which had not, such as the failure to overcome sectarian in-fighting in the north. Whereas violence could be justified on the part of the rebels, he was alarmed at "a proclamation of Lord Camden's, which is tantamount to a declaration of war, and the system of police (if police it can be called) is far more atrocious than ever it was in France, in the height of the Terror".⁸²³ This came towards the beginning of the unrest in mid-1798, Lord Camden – the Lord Lieutenant and therefore, in essence, representing the British interest in Ireland – taking action to clamp down on the rebels because of a fear of French influence; while Camden remained unconvinced about the extent of France's potential aid, he feared the possibility of an expedition was sustaining Catholic unrest.⁸²⁴ As such, Tone noted how "several regiments of the militia have refused to march against the people", defying British orders to violently suppress mounting unrest – a sign, Tone believed, that "if England must renounce at last her sovereignty, at least she will desolate what she cannot subdue".⁸²⁵ His commentary here clarifies his views on using violence to achieve political aims.

Writing to Matthew Tone in April 1798, he also admitted he was "not surprised at the event of combat", taking consolation in Russell's claim that "we are certainly the bravest nation in Europe".⁸²⁶ It is certainly easy to imagine how Tone's recent experience of revolutionary France would have led him to view violence as an inevitable state of republican revolution, hence why he was "not surprised" at the unrest. States descending into violence was also an idea linked to an ancient republican understanding of the decline of governments as part of a wider collapse of virtue in society – just as Cicero, whom Tone had read at Trinity College as a compulsory text, had argued.⁸²⁷

⁸²² Michael Burke, "Statement of Michael Burke Relating to the French Expedition under Humbert," September 1798, Rebellion Papers, 620/52/123, National Archives, Ireland. "Report of Tone's Conduct on Board the Hoche in October 1798," *Londonderry Journal*, November 13, 1798.

⁸²³ Wolfe Tone, "Diary," April 26, 1798, Tone Papers, MS 2049, ff. 310-315, Trinity College Dublin.

⁸²⁴ Marianne Elliott, "The Origins and Transformation of Early Irish Republicanism," *International Review of Social History* 23, no. 3 (December 1978): 405–28.

⁸²⁵ Tone, "Diary," April 26, 1798, f. 312.

⁸²⁶ Tone, "Letter to Matthew Tone," April 23, 1798.

⁸²⁷ Cicero, *On Duties*. Passim. Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De La Republica (51 BC)*, ed. James E.G. Zetzel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). There were also similarities between their ideas on the moral

Aside from the rebellion turning violent, which Tone did not necessarily oppose, but had not planned for, he was particularly concerned at news that prominent United Irishmen had been arrested. Even in the early stages of the rebellion, in March 1798, Tone had bemoaned the “unspeakable loss of so many brave and virtuous citizens” and “woe be to their tyrants”.⁸²⁸ That came in response to hearing that “the English government has arrested the whole committee of United Irishmen for the province of Leinster”, which he described as “the most terrible blow the cause of liberty in Ireland has yet sustained”. It would be impossible to “replace the energy, talents and integrity” of key figures such as Arthur O’Connor, as these men epitomised the virtue associated with the model republican citizen. Tone feared the rate of arrests suggested “very strong suspicions of treachery”.⁸²⁹ Several of his personal friends, including Thomas Addis Emmet and William James MacNevin, were detained at this stage, with warrants issued for the arrests of other influential United Irishmen including Lord Edward Fitzgerald, Joseph McCormick, and William Sampson. Tone effectively viewed the rebellion, therefore, as a battle between those who had stayed true to republican ideals, and those who were willing to align themselves with British interests.

This was particularly true when it came to the landed gentry. The rebellion had brought considerable social upheaval in the form of renewed tensions over land, pitting the peasantry against the landed gentry once more. From his previous writings in America, such as his 1796 *Memorials on the State of Ireland*, it is evident that Tone held clear views on property law, believing in the protection of property rights and advocating political representation based on land ownership.⁸³⁰ In the case of the latter, his views could be traced to a number of republican sources, most immediately America’s revolutionaries, but also Aristotle’s theory of timocracy, which held that only those who held property were able to engage in politics.⁸³¹

Land was a key issue at stake in 1798. Yet Tone’s accusation that the English interest in Ireland had tried to exaggerate the possibility of land redistribution, in order to “terrify the Irish gentry out of their wits and.... to crush the spirit of the people” seems an attempt to downplay the likelihood that land

responsibilities of government, Tone having consistently advocated a government that would be representative of the interests of the Catholic majority. Cicero’s *De Re Publica* (51 BC) held that a republic was the most effective system to ensure peace; thus, for Tone, peace could not be guaranteed until the republic had been secured. Tone, unlike Cicero, was a military man, enjoying his career in the French army and perhaps therefore even more likely to accept the violent disintegration of the existing Irish political apparatus.

⁸²⁸ Wolfe Tone, “Diary,” March 26, 1798, Tone papers, 2049, ff 303-304, Trinity College Dublin.

⁸²⁹ Ibid.

⁸³⁰ Tone, “First Memorial to the French Government on the Present State of Ireland”; Wolfe Tone, “Second Memorial to the French Government on the Present State of Ireland”.

⁸³¹ Robert C. Bartlett and Susan D. Collins, trans., *Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 178.

would be seized.⁸³² Tone targeted the complex identities of the Irish gentry, inferring they were “miserable slaves” who had misinterpreted the United Irish message by portraying the rebels as levellers. Instead, by bringing about Irish independence, the rebellion sought to secure “an object in which surely the men of property are the most interested”.⁸³³ He alleged they were only not party to this cause because “if they had one drop of Irish blood in their veins, one grain of true courage or genuine patriotism in their hearts, they should have been first to support this great object” and they were therefore the reason why the revolution had not been achieved without “a shock, or perhaps one drop of blood spilled”.⁸³⁴ Once more, as discussed in Chapter Two, Tone’s understanding of Irish identity was based more on civic ideas of participation than on ethnicity. Thus, members of the gentry could not be considered properly ‘Irish’ so long as their interests clashed with so many of the Irish population, as their relationship with the wider nation was tarnished.

Tone suggested that by aligning themselves with British interests, they had “desert[ed] the first and most sacred of all duties, the duty to their country”.⁸³⁵ In reality, many members of the Irish Protestant gentry, despite ostensibly enjoying both land and power, felt frustrated at the prevailing influence of Westminster. However, by not actively opposing British rule, Tone felt they were “disdaining to occupy the station they might have held among the people and which the people would have been glad to see them fill,” and as such, “they left a vacancy to be seized by those who had more courage, more sense and more honesty”.⁸³⁶ The United Irishmen could thus blame both the Catholic and Protestant gentry for their new aims, “a distribution of property and an agrarian law”. Though Tone opposed this and suggests other members had diverted from their original principles, as “in June 1795, when I was forced to leave the country, they entertained no such idea”, he warned that “the Irish gentry may accuse themselves” for neglecting to fulfil their duty to the nation. In contrast, those United Irishmen who sacrificed themselves during the insurrection, notably Fitzgerald, were “gallant”.⁸³⁷ Fitzgerald died after mounting an attack on Dublin, but because of his self-sacrifice, “his career is finished gloriously”, and “his memory will live forever in the heart of every honest Irishman”. Tone even suggested he would “rather be Fitzgerald as he is at this moment, wounded, in his dungeon, than Pitt at the head of the British Empire”. The Cork militia, on the other hand, were “villains” for “bearing arms against their country” following their engagement at Prosperous in County Kildare in May of 1798. A British garrison comprised of the Cork militia and a Welsh regiment were defeated by a few dozen rebels, the first notable victory of the rebellion.⁸³⁸ Yet at the

⁸³² Tone, *Life*, 481.

⁸³³ *Ibid.*

⁸³⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸³⁵ Wolfe Tone, “Diary,” April 27, 1798, Tone Papers, MS 2049, ff. 310-315, Trinity College Dublin.

⁸³⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸³⁷ Wolfe Tone, “Diary,” June 18, 1798, Tone papers, MS 2049, ff 328-331, Trinity College Dublin.

⁸³⁸ Padraic O’Farrell, *A History of County Kildare* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2003), 55.

core of this militia movement, as it had been throughout the eighteenth century, was a mission among its advocates to make Ireland's volunteers patriotic and invested in the state.⁸³⁹

In spite of the rebels enjoying some success, notably in June when they had defeated a division led by the English Colonel Walpole at Tubberneering, Tone made several references to the heavy losses suffered.⁸⁴⁰ Referring to that occasion, he wrote that “from the blood of every one of the martyrs of the liberty of Ireland will spring, I hope, thousands to revenge their fall”.⁸⁴¹ His phrasing, notably “the liberty of Ireland” is distinctly republican, as he does not describe them as martyrs of Ireland itself, which would have been a more identity-focused interpretation. Thus, we gain further insight into his views on the legitimisation of violence, which he saw primarily as the result of the authorities’ vehement crackdown. His diary entry from June 18 reported on fighting at Leinster, Kildare, and Wexford, taken from what he had read in French newspapers. Though “at Nenagh the English whip the most respectable inhabitants in the open streets till their blood flows into the kennels”, he warned them not to be deterred.⁸⁴² Based on his experience in the Low Countries, he recalled that “the 18,000 victims sacrificed by Alva [Fernando Alvarez de Toledo, duke of Alva] in the Low Countries in five years and on the scaffold did not prevent the establishment of the liberty of Holland”. The rebellion’s violent turn was of particular interest to Tone because of his personal links to those involved. Following the execution of John Keogh’s son Cornelius – Keogh having worked closely with Tone in the General Committee of the Catholics – he asked, “how many other valuable lives will be sacrificed before the fortune of Ireland be decided?” In an August letter to Matilda, he also took it as “some comfort that our friend Simms is out of the scrape”.⁸⁴³ Robert Simms had been adjutant-general of the United Irishmen in Antrim, leading part of the rising in Antrim and Down, which had lasted just a week and escaping without serious injury. It appears Tone viewed the rebellion’s violence as an inevitable, if regrettable, stage of the state’s disintegration, a means of framing the revolt in republican discourse about duty and “sacrifice”.

It is natural that historians who have focused on Tone specifically have largely discussed his role in the French expedition, though Elliott points out that his role in the wider rebellion was “public knowledge”, and that he knew the rebellion was all but over by the time he went to Ireland – as such,

⁸³⁹ Neal Garnham, “1782-85: Fencible Men and the Militia Reconsidered,” in *The Militia in Eighteenth-Century Ireland: In Defence of the Protestant Interest* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2012), 123–42.

⁸⁴⁰ James Gordon, *History of the Rebellion in Ireland, in the Year 1798, &c: Containing an Impartial Account of the Proceedings of the Irish Revolutionists, from the Year 1782, Till the Suppression of the Rebellion* (London: J.D. Dewick, 1803), 107–45. Edward Hay, *History of the Insurrection of the County of Wexford, A.D. 1798: Including an Account of Transactions Preceding That Event, Part 1798* (Dublin: J Stockdale, 1803), 147.

⁸⁴¹ Tone, “Diary.,” June 18, 1798

⁸⁴² Ibid.

⁸⁴³ Wolfe Tone, “Letter to Matilda Tone,” August 19, 1798, Tone (Dickason) papers, Trinity College Dublin.

he “embarked for Ireland that summer in the knowledge that defeat and death were inevitable”.⁸⁴⁴ By taking Tone’s commentary of the rebellion into account it is possible to appreciate more fully how he interpreted the event, and how it fitted into his existing ideas and aspirations. This analysis has demonstrated in new ways how Tone constructed an image of the rebellion in line with core republican values of virtue and dedication to the state, propagating an insurrection undertaken by patriots in order to overthrow a tyrannical government. It has also given further detail on his views on republicanism’s violent turn within Ireland, which has formed a crucial part of his legacy. His writings from mid-1798, the last year of his life and thus the culmination of his political journey, are pivotal to understanding how he understood these events as they are effectively his most concrete physical links to local revolts in Ireland.

Tone’s court martial and death (November 1798)

Tone had arrived back in Ireland on board the *Hoche* ship, named after the deceased General, which landed at Lough Swilly on 3 November 1798. The expedition had been intercepted and he was arrested as soon as he disembarked at Buncrana.⁸⁴⁵ He was briefly incarcerated for two days in Derry before being taken down to Dublin, where his court martial took place on November 10. Tone used the opportunity to offer his interpretation of events such as the Scullabogue massacre of largely Protestant civilians (June 5, 1798), and the execution of 36 men accused of being rebels by British forces at Dunlavin Green (May 26, 1798) in front of the court martial, before being convicted of treason.⁸⁴⁶ Courts martial were not ordinarily used for civilians, but an exception was made due to the extraordinary circumstances of the rebellion and as Tone was associated with the French army. Sentenced to hang, it is generally accepted that he cut his own throat on November 12, taking a week to die.

The documents available from this period of his life include texts of his speeches from his court martial, his final letters to members of the Directory in France, and to other members of the United Irishmen. Inevitably, the amount of source material available from this time was limited by the fact he had been detained. These writings and speeches, which were maintained as part of his family collection, will be used to illustrate his mindset in his final weeks, with a particular emphasis on his discussions of military self-sacrifice.

The court martial:

⁸⁴⁴ Elliott, *Wolfe Tone*, 394.

⁸⁴⁵ Ibid. 386–87.

⁸⁴⁶ Daniel Gahan, “The Scullabogue Massacre of 1798,” *History Ireland* 4, no. 3 (Autumn 1996): 27–31. Lawlor, *The Massacre on Dunlavin Green: A Story of the 1798 Rebellion*.

Tone's court martial speech has been instrumental in constructing his enduring legacy. In what have become some of his most often-recited words, he used the speech to restate his understanding of national independence. There are a handful of different versions of Tone's speech, one recorded in full and published in a pamphlet a matter of days afterwards, and the others taken from shortened minutes of the trial.⁸⁴⁷ The following comments are drawn from the extended version, entitled *Proceedings of a Military Court held in Dublin Barracks* (1798), unless otherwise referenced.⁸⁴⁸ Tone had been granted the opportunity to give his address, with short interruptions when he was cautioned for his inflammatory comments.

In his speech, he described the rebellion as an "attempt in which Washington succeeded and Kościuszko failed – the deliverance of my country".⁸⁴⁹ In 1794, Military leader Tadeusz Kościuszko had led an uprising against Russia and Prussia, a year after the Second Partition of Poland had proved a significant step towards the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth being annexed into Imperial Russia and the Kingdom of Prussia.⁸⁵⁰ Tone's knowledge of the Polish example is particularly telling, even more so than the American model given the latter's global prominence and his time in Philadelphia. As Róisín Healy notes, the Polish rebellion of 1794 had resonated with Irish radicals, particularly Tone.⁸⁵¹ There were some differences between their respective situations, notably that Poland had been a sovereign state before partition in 1772, whereas Ireland could not make the same claim despite having its own Parliament; yet Poland, despite ostensibly having this control, could do little to prevent imperial encroachment.⁸⁵² Whereas Tone wanted to undo the power of the aristocracy, in Poland it was the aristocrats themselves, including Kościuszko, who were trying to counter Russian influence.

⁸⁴⁷ *Proceedings of a Military Court Held in Dublin Barracks on Saturday the Tenth of November for the Trial of Theobald Wolfe Tone, Formerly Barrister at Law and Reputed Founder of the Late Irish Union and an Adjutant General in the Service of the French Republic on a Charge that He Being a Natural Born Subject of Our Lord the King,...Taken Traitorously Acting in Open Arms, Commanding an Hostile Force, for the Invasion of This Kingdom* (Dublin: Vincent Dowling, 1798); "Tone's Address to the Court Martial," November 10, 1798, Add. MS 38355, ff. 21-22, British Library. "Tone's Address to the Court Martial," November 10, 1798, HO 100/79, ff 96-97, Public Record Office.

⁸⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁵⁰ On the military career of Kościuszko, see: Alex Storozynski, *The Peasant Prince: Thaddeus Kościuszko and the Age of Revolution* (New York: Macmillan, 2009); Andrzej Walicki, *The Enlightenment and the Birth of Modern Nationhood: Polish Political Thought from Noble Republicanism to Tadeusz Kościuszko* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 90–100; Magdalena Micińska, "The Myth of Tadeusz Kościuszko in the Polish Mind (1794–1997)," *European Review of History* 5, no. 2 (September 1, 1998): 191–96.

⁸⁵¹ Róisín Healy, *Poland in the Irish Nationalist Imagination, 1772-1922: Anti-Colonialism within Europe* (Galway: Springer, 2017), 67.

⁸⁵² Róisín Healy, "The Era of the Partitions, 1772-1798," in *Poland in the Irish Nationalist Imagination*, 21–67.

Where there was a similarity was that Polish patriots had been basing their aspirations of freedom upon classical republicanism from the sixteenth century onwards.⁸⁵³ Furthermore, in the same way that Tone had earlier spoken of “Providence” with likely religious and determinist connotations, he described Ireland’s fight for national independence as a “sacred cause”, with reference to Poland and America.⁸⁵⁴ This may have provided a further indication that he viewed transatlantic republican movements, in whatever form they took, as having the potential to progress human society towards an inevitable goal. That may be telling of his understanding of the purpose of the Polish uprising.⁸⁵⁵ Kościuszko’s revolt was in fact founded on ideas of universal rights and territorial integrity. There were clear parallels between the anti-imperialist nature of his attempted revolution and the United Irish rebellion, which was an attempt first and foremost to remove British imperial influence in Ireland. Kościuszko had also played a role in the American War of Independence as one of a number of influential foreign military figures backed by French assistance, fighting on the side of the revolutionaries.⁸⁵⁶

Tone judges Kościuszko as having “failed”, discounting his previous revolutionary achievements and judging him only on his inability to secure Polish national liberation. Tone was relatively familiar with Polish contemporary affairs as this was not the first time he had used this example, having cited America, Poland, and France as models of progress in the area of individual liberties in *An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland*.⁸⁵⁷ There is a further intellectual link between Tone and Kościuszko, the latter having been a close ally of Thomas Jefferson, with whom Tone also shared many ideas about agrarian republicanism as detailed in Chapter Three.⁸⁵⁸ It is unsurprising, therefore, given his background that he also mentioned Washington to the court martial. During Tone’s time in America, he had not been particularly impressed with Washington, who he thought of as an unrelatable, “high-flying aristocrat”.⁸⁵⁹ Yet he acknowledged in his final public speech that Washington “succeeded” and would have in fact shared many of Kościuszko’s principles on

⁸⁵³ Anna Grzeskowiak-Krwawicz, *Queen Liberty: The Concept of Freedom in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth* (Boston: Brill, 2012), 85–101.

⁸⁵⁴ “Tone’s Address to the Court Martial,” November 10, 1798.

⁸⁵⁵ It may also be noteworthy that he echoes the wording of General Jean Hardy’s Address to the United Irishmen, if indeed he had received the document which had been published in August 1798.

⁸⁵⁶ George W. Kyte, “Thaddeus Kościuszko at the Liberation of Charleston,” *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 84, no. 1 (January 1983): 11–21. Francis C. KAJENCKI, *Thaddeus Kościuszko: Military Engineer of the American Revolution* (Texas: Southwest Polonia Press, 1998).

⁸⁵⁷ Tone, “An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland,” 31.

⁸⁵⁸ Gary Nash and G.R.G. Hodges, *Friends of Liberty: Thomas Jefferson, Tadeusz Kosciuszko, and Agrippa Hull* (New York: Basic Books, 2009).

⁸⁵⁹ Tone, “Letter to Thomas Russell,” September 1, 1795, f. 3.

individual rights and the independence of small nations.⁸⁶⁰

The most overt parallel between Polish and American concepts of freedom, and those which Tone hoped to instil in Ireland, was the idea of the nation being shaped by ‘the people’. The speech also provided an opportunity for Tone to explain why, in light of his views on ‘the people’ establishing their own republic, he had applied for French support. He deemed Irish liberation movements, including the United Irishmen “too weak to effect her independence without assistance”.⁸⁶¹ This was a development on his earlier understanding, expressed in 1790, that Ireland was a “powerful kingdom, rich in all the gifts of nature” and well-equipped to fend for itself.⁸⁶² In the eight years between these two statements, he had developed the conviction that “the connection of Great Britain” was “the bane” of the nation’s happiness, the primary obstacle which prevented Ireland from operating as it should. In another version, it is written in greater detail: “its prosperity, its liberty, and its happiness”, also echoing the “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness”, the unalienable rights, laid out in the US Declaration of Independence.⁸⁶³ A nation’s ‘happiness’ was central to the purpose of ancient republics, above wealth and imperial ambition. Thus, this proved a powerful counter to arguments in favour of Britain and Ireland continuing their existing political relationship.

The second major point of discussion in Tone’s final speech was on the violence of the rebellion, a theme which, as discussed, was prevalent in his writings during the unrest too. He acknowledged “very great atrocities” on both sides, insisting that “a fair and open war” had been his intention, yet it had “degenerated into a system of assassination, massacre, and plunder”.⁸⁶⁴ The bloodiness of the rebellion was captured in some of its worst atrocities, such as the massacres at Scullabogue Barn and at Dunlavin Green. At Scullabogue, between 100-200 local men, women, and children suspected of loyalist sympathies were contained in a barn in order to stop them actively supporting British forces. The barn was later set alight by a party fleeing the nearby Battle of New Ross.⁸⁶⁵ At Dunlavin Green, 36 rebels were executed by firing squad.⁸⁶⁶ Despite having no direct relation to these events, at his trial Tone felt the need to acknowledge that the rebellion had diverged from his ideals:

⁸⁶⁰ Andrzej Walicki, “The Legacy of the Enlightenment and Some New Dilemmas in the Political Thought of Tadeusz Kościuszko,” in *The Enlightenment and the Birth of Modern Nationhood: Polish Political Thought from Noble Republicanism to Tadeusz Kościuszko* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 94–127.

⁸⁶¹ “Tone’s Address to the Court Martial,” November 10, 1798.

⁸⁶² Wolfe Tone, “On the English Connection,” ff 2-26.

⁸⁶³ “Tone’s Address to the Court Martial,” November 10, 1798.

⁸⁶⁴ “Tone’s Address to the Court Martial.”

⁸⁶⁵ Gahan, “New Ross, Scullabogue and the 1798 Rebellion in Southwestern Wexford”; Gahan, “The Scullabogue Massacre of 1798.”

⁸⁶⁶ Lawlor, *The Massacre on Dunlavin Green: A Story of the 1798 Rebellion*; Elizabeth Malcolm, “A New Age or Just the Same Old Cycle of Extirpation? Massacre and the 1798 Irish Rebellion,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 15, no. 2 (2013): 151–66.

If in consequence of the measures in which I have been engaged misfortunes have been brought upon this country, I heartily lament it, but let it be remembered that it is now nearly four years since I have quit Ireland and consequently I have been personally concerned in none of them.⁸⁶⁷

While seeking to distance himself from some of the rebellion's atrocities, he depicted the rebellion as a necessary means to an end of establishing an Irish republic. Tone's court martial speech was among the most demonstrative evidence of his republican ideals, utilising the examples of Polish and American revolutionaries to further his arguments for freedom from imperial power and more generally, the power of the people.

Tone's death:

Tone's final act, his probable suicide by cutting his throat rather than being hanged by his enemies, sought to replicate the honourable death of a Roman soldier. Having brought out three commissions to show the court, Tone had hoped to use them as evidence "that I stand here as a French soldier and must consider myself, and trust I shall be considered by you, precisely in the situation of a French émigré in France."⁸⁶⁸ He added that as his situation was "a military one", and as he was being tried by court martial, he expected "a military execution". He noted that France had the "noble mindedness to vouchsafe Sombreuil and Charette the death of a soldier," even in the case of its enemies, such as the Royalist general Charles François de Virot marquis de Sombreuil, though he had actually died by the guillotine. In a letter to the Executive Directory on the same day, Tone informed them that he had been sentenced to death, accusing the English Government of having "decided not to respect my rights as a citizen and as a French officer", hence his suicide rather than being executed as a criminal.⁸⁶⁹

Tone's legacy has overcome significant social and religious taboos about suicide, which was not only a sin in the eyes of the Church, but also against Irish law. If anything, as scholars have commented, his perceived martyrdom has only fuelled his image among modern Irish republicans.⁸⁷⁰ It is also

⁸⁶⁷ "Tone's Address to the Court Martial," November 10, 1798.

⁸⁶⁸ *Proceedings of a Military Court Held in Dublin Barracks on Saturday the Tenth of November for the Trial of Theobald Wolfe Tone.*

⁸⁶⁹ Wolfe Tone, "Letter to the Executive Directory," November 10, 1798, Court-martial proceedings, MS 872, f. 149, Trinity College Dublin.

⁸⁷⁰ Alan Ford, "Martyrdom, History and Memory in Early Modern Ireland," in *History and Memory in Modern Ireland*, ed. Ian McBride (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 43–67; Roy Foster, "Remembering 1798," in *History and Memory in Modern Ireland*, ed. Ian McBride (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); S.L. Williams, "'Another Martyr for Old Ireland', PhD. Thesis" (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1996).

illuminating of the fact that his own values were more directly indebted to Roman republicanism than Irish social conditioning, as laid out by the law and the Church. There has been some minor debate about the manner of his death, perhaps as a result of these social conditions, but there is little to contradict newspaper reports of “Mr Tone recovering of the wound which he inflicted upon himself” after cutting his throat with a small knife.⁸⁷¹ In *Life*, his son William reports his final words, “I am sorry I have been so bad an anatomist”, which would appear to confirm the manner of his death, not least because his family would have had little incentive to misrepresent it in this way.⁸⁷² Elliott speculates that this debate was borne of the nationalist community rewriting history to some extent and struggling to come to terms with Tone having committed the ‘final sin’.⁸⁷³ Yet Tone himself viewed suicide as an admirable act, describing the “voluntary death” of the radical spy William Jackson as something which “must command the respect of the most virulent persecutor”.⁸⁷⁴ The debate about Tone’s death is an important part of a wider point about his legacy. Whereas his image has been moulded to fit Irish expectations, he was in fact much keener to adhere to republican traditions, even suicide. This was what ultimately defined him.

Tone’s self-inflicted death came from a belief that he had “sacrificed for the Republic, all that is dearest – my wife, my children, my liberty, my life”.⁸⁷⁵ In this there was a Roman sense of *dignitas*, whereby his military exploits could not be separated from his moral duty to his family. He wrote to United Irishmen Thomas Addis Emmet, William James MacNeven, Arthur O’Connor, and John Sweetman, on November 10, urging them to look after his “utterly destitute” children, imploring them to do so “as Irishmen, as men of honor”.⁸⁷⁶ Despite his exile, he evidently retained close links to the United Irish leadership, Emmet writing to Thomas Russell shortly before the court martial in November 1798 that it was “impossible for anyone to be more concerned or more anxious than we all are about the fate of Tone”.⁸⁷⁷ Tone had interpreted self-sacrifice not simply as a willingness to die for the nation, but in having deprived himself, as “for a series of years did I maintain in honorable poverty the sentiments I now profess”.⁸⁷⁸ This was in accordance with his views on the ills of luxury and its ability to corrupt, as examined earlier.

⁸⁷¹ Patrick Denis O’Donnell, “Wolfe Tone’s Death: Suicide or Assassination?,” *Irish Journal of Medical Science* 166, no. 1 (1997): 57–59. “Report Discussing Tone’s Court Martial and Attempted Suicide,” *Morning Chronicle*, November 19, 1798.

⁸⁷² Tone, *Life*, 539.

⁸⁷³ Elliott, *Wolfe Tone*, 399.

⁸⁷⁴ Wolfe Tone, “Letter to Arthur O’Connor”, 285.

⁸⁷⁵ Tone, “Letter to the Executive Directory.”

⁸⁷⁶ Wolfe Tone, “Letter to Thomas Addis Emmet, William James MacNeven, Arthur O’Connor and John Sweetman,” November 10, 1798, MS 36094/3/G, National Library of Ireland.

⁸⁷⁷ Thomas Addis Emmet, “Letter from Thomas Addis Emmet to Thomas Russell,” November 10, 1798, Rebellion Papers, 620/15/2/15, National Archives, Ireland.

⁸⁷⁸ “Tone’s Address to the Court Martial,” November 10, 1798.

Putting together a picture of the last weeks of Tone's life, it becomes clear that by his final year, he remained committed to classical republican ideals about citizen virtue, embodied in the rebellion via self-sacrifice and military discipline. Tone had imagined himself a republican soldier leading a volunteer movement that would transform Ireland into a small but prosperous, independent republic. That the immediate consequences of the 1798 rebellion prompted quite the opposite, hastening along the Acts of Union in 1800, has been well-noted, and as it transpired, he was far removed from most of the action on the ground. The most significant event of Tone's military and political career had not hitherto been viewed as a manifestation of classical republican ideals and this new interpretation allows both Tone's political thought, and the rebellion itself, to be seen in a clearer light.

Conclusion

The realities of Tone's disconnection from the 1798 rebellion, the event of his life with which he has been so strongly associated, have left wider questions unanswered about the final years of his life. This chapter has sought to illuminate some of those issues, namely by placing new emphasis on his time in the Batavian Republic, and by contextualising his ideas between 1797-98 in line with his wider republican thought. The end of Tone's life was not simply about the 1798 rebellion; indeed, it is more effectively understood as the period when he constructed his vision for Ireland as a post-revolutionary society.

This chapter brings together historiography on the 1798 rebellion, and research on Tone, for the first time. His isolation from the United Irishmen at this time – evidenced by his limited correspondence with them – and his relative inaction relating to the rebellion itself, may explain why this has not been attempted before. It is important to consider Tone's views on a rebellion which he played such an important role in starting, even if he was not present for the majority of it.

By examining in detail Tone's ideas in the run-up to the rebellion, it has been demonstrated that by his final years, especially from 1796 onwards, Tone *was* in possession of a coherent political philosophy. Dunne's essay had sketched out some of this philosophy, and suggested that what took the hardest hit with the failure of 1798 was Tone's "theory of politics ... his belief that his colonial society could be reshaped to give those excluded, like himself, an acceptable role and identity".⁸⁷⁹ However, even if Tone's ideas did not bear immediate fruit, this does not mean they should be dismissed as ill-thought-out. For instance, in northern Europe he made nuanced arguments on how the clergy should be sustained and the Church's relationship to the state, as well as how the freedom of the press should be limited to prevent attacks on well-functioning governments. Where Elliott has

⁸⁷⁹ Dunne, *Colonial Outsider*, 61.

described him as a “typical product of the Enlightenment ... anti-clerical, though a believer in a deity”, it should be questioned whether this is an effective entry point into his political ideas despite his references to providence. Tone may indeed have been typical of the late eighteenth century, but such was the variety of ideas associated with the ‘Enlightenment’ that it is too complex to be used as shorthand for his development. Moreover, to define Tone as such does not do justice to the breadth and complexity of his engagement with various strands of contemporary political discourse.⁸⁸⁰ His experiences in the Batavian Republic and his encounters with Dutch troops were key to sharpening his own political synthesis, particularly regarding his expectations of the model republican citizen. Tone’s political thought has ultimately too often been thought of as an abstract idealism about national independence, and more recent attempts to recast him as ‘typical’ of the Enlightenment have not sufficiently delved into the nuances of his positions.

One challenge to this attempt at analysing his political thought has admittedly been piecing together some of his contradictory views. Indeed, at various points he meandered between extolling the principle of universal human rights and dismissing France’s other revolutionary efforts. Most importantly, this chapter has demonstrated that Tone viewed the 1798 rebellion through the lens of republican thought, and more specifically, through the lens of seventeenth-century English republican discourse about tyranny. Furthermore, his time in the French army hardened his fascination with the military and added to his conviction that it would be ordinary citizens who were to overthrow that tyrannical system in Ireland. The most consistent theme throughout his final writings and speeches is one of national duty and sacrifice, clear manifestations of civic virtue which he believed he had embodied in his last years and ultimately, in his death.

⁸⁸⁰ Elliott, *Wolfe Tone*, 364.

Conclusion

Dunne commented in 1982 that “the neglect of Tone by historians is part of a wider phenomenon – the lack of critical analysis of Irish nationalist ideologies”.⁸⁸¹ This may, at least in part, be attributed to the fact that it has been assumed he came up with little that was new. As Elliott put it, “Tone was a distiller of ideas rather than an original thinker”.⁸⁸² Regardless of whether Tone constructed a wholly coherent and original synthesis out of different strands of eighteenth-century political and philosophical discourse, he remains a pivotal reference point in the development of modern Irish republicanism.

The aim of this research was to better ascertain the intellectual and philosophical underpinnings of Wolfe Tone’s political ideas, given that historians have thus far largely approached his life from a narrative biographical standpoint, looking at his life as a whole. The thesis has placed new emphasis, where it was previously lacking, on Tone’s engagement with classical republicanism, tying together European and transatlantic aspects of political thought and shaping them for a peculiarly Irish context.

Tone is primarily remembered in popular memory as a precursor to nineteenth-century Irish nationalism, and he remains central to Irish republican culture. Therefore, a full understanding of his political ideas has implications beyond the historical field, for broader questions of identity. While historians have already suggested that Tone was in many ways a typical eighteenth-century thinker, this research has argued that this characterization deserves to be explored in much more depth and detail. The thesis has drawn a number of conclusions about Tone’s ideas which do support some of the comments offered by biographers such as Dunne, Elliott, and Boylan. While Dunne was hesitant about “over-systematising” Tone’s ideology, he acknowledged that a “quite large body of writings reveals consistent patterns and clear lines of development in his thinking”.⁸⁸³ This research owes a significant debt to the work of these preceding writers and while it was not the explicit purpose of this research to construct a portrait of Tone the man, their insights on the more biographical elements, such as the reasons he was drawn into politics, his desperation for an income in Britain, and his unhappiness in America, have proved highly valuable.

However, this thesis has also attempted to challenge existing preconceptions about Tone and put forward new interpretations of his writings. In his journey from a conventional Irish reformist arguing for increased legislative independence, to a revolutionary trying to orchestrate a rebellion against

⁸⁸¹ Dunne, *Colonial Outsider*, 14.

⁸⁸² Elliott, *Wolfe Tone*, 84.

⁸⁸³ Dunne, *Colonial Outsider*, 15.

British rule, it had been suggested, for example by Cronin and Roche, that what has since been characterised as the radical Enlightenment was among the most significant influences in Tone's development.⁸⁸⁴ In fact, it has here been argued that the label of "Enlightenment" hardly does justice to the broad array of sometimes contradictory influences which helped inform Tone's views. Arguably, Tone was an 'Enlightenment thinker' primarily by coincidence and era and was most inclined to engage with the seventeenth-century revival of ancient republicanism.

These conclusions have been reached by analysing a wide variety of Tone's writings, from his most famous published pamphlets such as *Spanish War!* and *An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland*, to diary entries, his shorter essays and private correspondence with fellow radicals, his family, and other political and military leaders.

Observations

Examining Tone's works over a number of years has opened up several avenues for exploring the nuances of his political thought. Though not strictly biographical, this study of Tone has largely been conducted chronologically, firstly for the purpose of clarity, and secondly, in order to gauge shifts in his philosophical and political outlook. One unexpected consequence of following this method was the emergence of a coherent pattern in his writings, one which showed him to be well acquainted with pre-1789 republicanism, thus significantly discounting the impact of events in France upon him. Instead, his early writings from the 1780s showed a clear familiarity and consistent engagement with classical republican values.

In Chapter One, Tone's early writings in Britain and Ireland were detailed to analyse his responses to debate about the constitution and systems of government. Much of Tone's own commentary focused on the Glorious Revolution as well as on the regency crisis, both of these having implications for mixed government closer to home. He had first begun to analyse the relationship between the Westminster and Dublin parliaments in his 1790 *Review of the Conduct of Administration*.⁸⁸⁵ The text drew upon not only contemporary debates, but also on seventeenth century Lockean ideas about popular consent and government accountability to its citizens. Such questions were all the more pertinent in the light of the 1782 constitution in Ireland, legislation which Tone deemed to have failed. The constitution had on paper granted Ireland greater legislative freedom. In reality, as Tone explained in *Spanish War!*, there were important limitations which could not be overlooked. Namely, Ireland was still at the mercy of Westminster regarding its foreign policy and would have had little

⁸⁸⁴ Cronin and Roche, *Freedom the Wolfe Tone Way*, 227.

⁸⁸⁵ Tone, "A Review of the Conduct of Administration, 26–49.

choice but to partake in the impending conflict with Spain. In highlighting these paradoxes, Tone was, by his own admission, following in the footsteps of several early patriot writers, particularly Swift. Yet he was also keen to take on board the ongoing pamphlet wars, led by Paine and Burke, using the rhetoric of the former, who had extolled the ‘rights of man’ in his publication of the same name, to make his arguments.

Having detailed Tone’s formative years, including his education at Trinity College and Middle Temple, one of the major new discoveries of the second chapter was that Tone’s very understanding of Irish identity was based on citizen-state relations.⁸⁸⁶ Thus, he did not see the Irish people as linked to the land through historic, linguistic, ethnic, or cultural ties, in the way that Herder had set out, but instead through citizenship and ties of allegiance, similar to the city-states of Ancient Rome and Greece. This is arguably among the most important points clarified by this thesis, given the implications for how he is historicised. Tone first used republican values of virtue, bravery and spirit to link peoples and nations in his *Sandwich Islands Memoranda*, written in 1788 and again in 1790. These texts depicted an archetypal Roman-inspired utopian military colony of a few hundred citizens, not natives but taken from elsewhere and implanted, who would operate as volunteers. Such rhetoric can also be found consistently in a number of his shorter essays, *On the State of Ireland in 1720*, *On the State of Ireland in 1790*, *On the Necessity of Domestic Union*, and his *Address to the Roman Catholics of Ireland*.

As his ideas progressed, he began to use a similar logic to address the Catholic question, seeing them first and foremost as citizens, rather than defining them by religious denomination. The suppression of radicalism was identified as an important stage in Tone’s development, the clampdown on seditious activity from the mid-1790s leading the United Irishmen to be forced underground. This interface of Tone’s life, between leaving Ireland and arriving in America, is pivotal. Just as historiographical trends are leaning towards emphasising a European-Atlantic Enlightenment, it has here been demonstrated that there were important factors in Tone’s political development both before and during his exile.⁸⁸⁷

⁸⁸⁶ Since the purpose of neither Elliott nor Dunne’s work is to analyse Tone’s philosophy, there is yet to be an alternative explanation provided for why Tone did not think of national identity in the Herderian sense.

⁸⁸⁷ Robert A. Ferguson, “What Is Enlightenment? Some American Answers,” in *The American Enlightenment, 1750-1820* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997), 22–44; Henry Steele Commager, “The Enlightenment Spreads to America,” in *The Empire of Reason: How Europe Imagined and America Realised the Enlightenment* (New York: Phoenix, 2000), 15–40; Jonathan Israel, “Europe and the Remaking of the World,” in *Democratic Enlightenment: Philosophy, Revolution, and Human Rights 1750-1790* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 411–630.

Chapter Three went on to position Tone's republicanism against that which he found in America during his exile. Ancient ideas, as utilised by contemporary American political figures, informed his way of thinking about property, popular consent, and agrarianism. The period of his life spent in Philadelphia provides circumstantial evidence that he was not solely seeking to emulate the French republic in his plans for Ireland, as he saw the newly-formed US republic as an alternative model for representative democracy, its founders having tried to emulate the system found in Britain. Tone's placing in Pennsylvania is of particular interest in the context of his religious tolerance, the state also impressing Tone because of its ability to function within its own means and without debt. Though it was far from peculiar that he should have ended up in America when forced to leave Ireland, his ideas provide an interesting comparison to those which were prevalent in the United States at that time. Writings such as his *Memorandum on the State of Ireland* are illuminative of his views on popular consent and sovereignty. These were of particular relevance given George Washington's sanctioning of the Jay Treaty in spite of considerable public opposition.

America could also be framed as an example of a post-revolutionary quasi-democratic society due to Locke's prominence in its political thought, together with revolutionary concepts such as 'no taxation without representation' which Tone could in turn utilise on behalf of Irish Catholics. His engagement with Lockean principles, which Elliott speculates he had moved away from by then, also appears to have still been informing his views on property.⁸⁸⁸ The individualist rhetoric surrounding land ownership in America, property serving as a tie between citizens and the state, were taken on board by Tone. When this is combined with his leaning towards Jeffersonian agrarianism, he adopted a relatively novel take on property for an Irish Patriot, one which was clearly distinct from the republicanism which had been prevalent in France in the early 1790s advocating land redistribution. The two contrasting stances can be found in his various letters, and it is of note that his correspondence with French officials introduce ideas contrary to his previous views, perhaps intentionally. Yet republican debates in America were also divided on economic matters. Tone was concerned by Federalist commercialism and was particularly clear in his stance against debt, his own ideas more closely aligning with those of Jefferson, who believed that farmers were a state's most important citizens. The wealth associated with those elements of American society that followed the British example – both its commercialism and its aristocracy – came at a price of virtue and peace. By opposing these, Tone was essentially rejecting not only British rule in the colonies, but the entire British model of society, a subversion of English republican views of itself as an advanced, pioneering nation.

⁸⁸⁸ Elliott, *Wolfe Tone*, 85.

In a similar way to how ancient republicanism experienced a revival courtesy of eighteenth-century American thinkers, the same was true in France, with writers like Mably and Rousseau at the forefront of its resurgence. Several years before the French Revolution, Tone had already become familiar with many of his core republican values as a result of his classical education at Trinity College, where much of his studies were undertaken in Latin and he became versed in ancient writers such as Cicero. The starting point for Chapter Four was the wealth of literature on the French Revolution's impact on Ireland and as a result, the assumption which has followed that it was the driving force behind Tone's journey towards revolution. However, once a comparison of his ideas alongside some of the key concepts of eighteenth-century French political thought was conducted, it could be demonstrated that he took very little from *philosophes* or other famous French thinkers. For instance, he was hesitant to embrace Rousseauian direct democracy, instead advocating a representative system and at some points even suggesting the franchise should remain restricted dependent on class and wealth. His primary problem with Ireland's existing government was British influence and the corruption of the executive and Commons, not the system of representative government per se - particularly if it could be adapted to properly incorporate Catholics.

As was typical of many reformists in Britain and Ireland, Tone also took issue with some elements of how the French Revolution had unfolded, notably its descent into violence and its attacks on religion. It has been little noted that in his *Second Memorial to the French Government on the Present State of Ireland*, he did suggest to the Directory that church lands would be seized as one means of financing an independent Ireland.⁸⁸⁹ However, as explored, he more often spoke on the need to protect freedom of religion and property rights. It is quite possible that his comments against the Catholic Church have been overlooked due to his reputation as a unifying figure campaigning on behalf of the Catholic people, with his son also editing out derogatory writings about the institution of the Church from *Life*. Meanwhile, Tone did admire other elements of the French Revolution, praising the militias of both the French and American political scenes, perhaps unsurprisingly given the culture of volunteerism in Ireland. He discussed the importance of a 'people's army' - rather than the existing 'Irish militias' which were in effect controlled by British forces - in a number of his later essays, *To the Militia in Ireland*, *To the Irishmen now serving aboard the British navy*, and in his *Address to the Peasantry in Ireland*.⁸⁹⁰

⁸⁸⁹ Tone, "Second Memorial to the French Government on the Present State of Ireland," ff. 93-98.

⁸⁹⁰ Wolfe Tone, "To the Militia of Ireland," December 22, 1796, Tone papers, MS 2050, f. 15, Trinity College Dublin; Wolfe Tone, "To the Irishmen Now Serving Aboard the British Navy," 1796, AF III 186 B, dossier 859, Archives Nationales, Paris, Directoire Exécutif; Tone, "An Address to the Peasantry of Ireland - By a Traveller," 1796, f.186.

Finally, Chapter Five explored key developments in Tone's final years, with an emphasis on the 1798 rebellion. Despite Tone's distance from the action and the fact he only arrived in Ireland towards the end of the unrest, it has nevertheless come to define his legacy. Indeed, the main role he played, which was to secure French assistance, did not prove decisive. Analysing in more depth than has previously been attempted his political thought while in the Batavian Republic, and latterly in France, allowed a clearer depiction of his ideas by the end of his life. Many of these enduring ideas, such as the rebellion serving as a way of differentiating 'good' citizens from bad, were the cumulative result of the influences discussed in the preceding chapters.

New findings

It was stated at the outset that the only comprehensive modern biography of Tone, the first edition published by Elliott in 1989, is not a study of his ideas, but rather a thorough account of his life. Not only has Elliott contributed the authoritative biography, but it should be noted that her work was also the only to mention Tone's ancient republicanism. However, it has been argued throughout this thesis that insufficient emphasis has been placed on this element of his political thought. It was in fact, it is here contended, the defining factor in his development and vision for an Irish republic.

As the first study focused specifically on his political thought, this thesis has benefitted from the narrative biographies by Tone scholars such as Boylan and Elliott.⁸⁹¹ In doing so, it has found new ways of understanding Tone which to some extent contradict both Dunne and Elliott's image of a frustrated aspiring politician, discouraged by his early setbacks and embittered by exile, and whose ideas were unoriginal and inconsistent.⁸⁹² Indeed, by analysing Tone's writings following the approach of the 'Cambridge School' of intellectual history, it has been possible to draw a number of new conclusions. These can be grouped into two categories: areas of Tone's thought which have not been sufficiently analysed, and secondly, those which have been misinterpreted.

Chiefly, Tone's engagement with classical republicanism has not been given due attention. The key values of virtue and duty, stemming originally from ancient societies and reintroduced into mainstream European thought in the Renaissance period and subsequently via the English and French traditions, were central to his political philosophy. Thus, Tone was influenced by a more complex web of ideas than simply the French revolutionary thought of his contemporaries, or the more local tradition of Irish Patriotism.

⁸⁹¹ Boylan, *Wolfe Tone*; Elliott, *Wolfe Tone*.

⁸⁹² Dunne, *Colonial Outsider*, 18; Elliott, *Wolfe Tone*, 1.

Such a complex intellectual background has yet to be navigated. For instance, despite the significance of Tone's exile in America and the similarities between their arguments against aristocracy, Britain's commercial model, and the circumstantial evidence for him having read Jeffersonian literature, his ideas had not previously been compared with Jefferson's. Jefferson was indeed key in reintroducing ancient republican ideas into post-revolutionary America, and Tone wrote on the above topics during his time in Philadelphia. Likewise, it also appears likely that the policies of religious tolerance Tone found in Pennsylvania, as epitomised by the Quaker constitution and its emphasis on religious freedom and stances against persecution of minority groups, would have appealed, even if his own views on these subjects were already well-honed by 1795.

Thus, several areas of Tone's political development have warranted further discussion. Nevertheless, there are other areas which have prompted serious analysis, but which have arguably led to misinterpretation. Indeed, this research has shown that doubt may be cast on a number of previous assertions. Chapter Two demonstrated that Tone should not be understood as a pre-romantic 'nationalist', with the obvious caveat that such an ideology did not yet exist at any rate. Instead, his views were based on ties of citizenship and republican values, as opposed to ethnic or cultural links to the nation.

By pinpointing Tone's ideas more specifically, it was also possible to establish that the republic which he envisaged was essentially an amalgamation of English, French, wider European and transatlantic republican traditions, not solely inspired by the French Revolution as predominantly argued by historians such as Kearney.⁸⁹³ This was most apparent in his persistent arguments for representative, rather than direct, democracy. His works meander, though the same can be said of French political events, between accepting the universalism espoused in the French revolutionary mission to spread republicanism through its sister republics, towards becoming increasingly one-nation focused. Much of what he did *appear* to borrow from the French model broadly corresponded with wider ancient republicanism. Indeed, not only was this deconstructed in Chapter Four, Chapter One placed him more precisely as under the influence of the Glorious Revolution, falling in line with Whig thinking on concepts such as Lockean popular consent. It is a point worth reiterating not least because much of this thinking was demonstrated in his private and public writing in the years prior to the French Revolution. Surprisingly, therefore, only Elliott has previously placed much emphasis on his republican education at Trinity and the role this played in his early development.⁸⁹⁴

⁸⁹³ Kearney, "The Irish Heritage of the French Revolution: The Rights of People and the Rights of Man," 30–47.

⁸⁹⁴ Elliott, *Wolfe Tone*, 20.

The final chapter rounded up Tone's later years and attempted to recontextualise his role in relation to the rebellion. Given that he was isolated from events on the ground, his significance lay in his securing the French invasion and arguably therefore in moving the United Irish movement towards the French model of republicanism from 1796 onwards. It was perhaps in his final year, prior to his suicide, as the rebellion began to gather momentum, that he most expounded his views on civic virtue, seeing the insurrection as the pinnacle of self-sacrifice and devotion to the nation.

Ultimately, this research has primarily contributed to our understanding of Tone in two ways. It is the first prolonged analysis of his political thought specifically, counteracting the tendency to dismiss his political thought as lacking in depth or placing too much emphasis on his lack of originality. This study should therefore help to differentiate his ideas from other members of the United Irishmen so we can better understand contrasting policies amongst the leaders of the movement. Secondly, it has cast new light on the nature of his ideas. By examining various political contexts and intellectual traditions, it has positioned him not as a product solely of the French Revolution, but as an eighteenth-century radical peculiarly placed to combine different philosophies. Without fully appreciating the extent of his engagement with the ancient republican elements of these traditions, it is impossible to understand fully the model of society which he was trying to achieve.

Challenges and unanswered questions

This thesis has attempted to avoid the pitfalls of relying on Tone's own writings as an honest reference point for his ideas. From a practical view, questions may be raised about his penchant for twisting information to suit his audience, as well as the inconsistencies – such as on property, the nature of the French Revolution, and the Church - between his public and private correspondence and those writings which were for a British and Irish audience as opposed to the French. At best, these texts have provided insight into an occasionally misinformed radical, at worst one determined to adapt his interpretation of events to his own agenda. His correspondence with the Directory, and in particular with Napoleon, show a preoccupation with political status, not that it should negate their usefulness altogether. It is also worth considering that the fact he was willing to sacrifice some of his own personal ideas in order to secure military assistance – or at least that he was keen to adhere to the Directory's own vision for post-revolutionary societies – is also revealing of his practicality. Tone may have viewed these exchanges merely as a way of securing military aid, even if it meant contorting his own ideas.

Regarding William Tone's compiling of his father's works, while giving us an overall picture, that is not to say that each individual document ought to be seen as a gateway into Tone's ideas. Many of his

shorter correspondence tell us very little, and *Life* never claims to be a complete collection.⁸⁹⁵ When many of Tone's writings were lost in between his death and *Life*'s first publication in 1826, it is impossible to measure the insight that was lost with them and moreover, there is the possibility that his family may have omitted other texts, as discussed.

There have also been a number of challenges presented regarding which methodology would best suit constructing an intellectual history. One initial method used was similar to Smyth's 2012 article, *Wolfe Tone's Library*, which had attempted to gauge the different thinkers who influenced him by measuring who he had cited.⁸⁹⁶ In order to build upon Smyth's work, it was found that Paine was cited the most, followed by Burke and Swift. Inevitably, one factor that led to the abandonment of this strategy was the failure to align these citations with the ideas discussed, not least with prominent Patriot influences such as Molyneux only being referenced once. Locke, meanwhile, is only named once, but to downplay his impact would be to overlook Tone's persistent engagement with seventeenth-century English republicanism. Hence, the methodology used has largely followed the Cambridge model of intellectual history, recontextualising Tone's ideas so as to better understand the intent behind his writings.

Research impact, memory, and Tone's public legacy

One of the greatest challenges involved in reassessing Tone's ideas has been to avoid falling into the trap of discussing the separate issue of public memory. While Tone's wider legacy should not be conflated with how his life has been recorded by historians, the two are somewhat interlinked. Part of the reason behind Tone's enduring significance for scholars is the fact that his cultural influence remains immense, from the number of sports clubs and associations named after to him to the music of the rebel group *The Wolfe Tones*. At the 2004 commemorations at Tone's burial place at Bodenstown, which have taken place every year since 1992, Gerry Adams described modern-day Sinn Féin as "Irish Republicans in the tradition of Tone".⁸⁹⁷

Tone's work towards securing political independence from Britain has laid the foundations for later Irish republican movements and has contributed to this legacy. However, the Tone who occupies such a significant place in Irish cultural memory is primarily the Tone of "romantic Ireland" depicted in Yeats' *September 1913*.⁸⁹⁸ That Tone's most active years politically coincided with the start of a

⁸⁹⁵ Tone, *Life*.

⁸⁹⁶ Smyth, "Wolfe Tone's Library: The United Irishmen and 'Enlightenment,'" 423–35.

⁸⁹⁷ Gerry Adams, "Bodenstown Speech," *Sinn Féin* (blog), 2004, <https://www.sinnfein.ie/contents/15203>.

⁸⁹⁸ W.B. Yeats, "September 1913," in *The Collected Works of W.B. Yeats*, II, vol. I (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997).

romantic era of intellectual, musical, artistic, and literary movements is partly responsible for this tendency to approach Tone as an icon of popular history. Indeed, Elliott ends her biography with an entire chapter devoted to the “cult of Tone”.⁸⁹⁹ It is this Tone which inspired Thomas Davis and the Young Irelanders, the father of Irish republicanism hailed by Padraig Pearse at his graveside in 1913.⁹⁰⁰ Pearse himself has played his own part in ensuring Tone has been remembered in such a way, as “clear and precise and worthy of the concept of nationality”.⁹⁰¹ These two topics – the historiography surrounding Tone and how he has been remembered in public memory – ought to be treated as two different areas of study even if they are sometimes inevitably entwined, with this thesis having focused on the former.

There is a growing amount of literature concerning how 1798 has been remembered, or even misremembered, in Ireland. Roy Foster contends that following the initial trauma of the rebellion’s violence, which caused a neglect of public memory, the centenary in 1898 witnessed the height of public commemoration – yet Foster also notes that, courtesy of the twentieth century scholarship on the rebellion, there now exists a situation whereby “1798 has been repackaged, and the intentions of the principal actors prioritized above the actual outcome of events”.⁹⁰² Guy Beiner has recently contextualised the challenges of remembering 1798 amidst the Troubles, in particular the appropriation of the United Irishmen by the nationalist community. In the north, therefore, “the memory of the United Irishmen had no place in an official memorial culture that equated Ulster with unionist Northern Ireland” and all the while, “state support in southern Ireland [sic] for commemoration of the 1798 rebellion only exacerbated suspicions of creeping irredentism”.⁹⁰³ Peter Collins approaches commemoration of 1798 in a similar way, contrasting the issue in the north and south.⁹⁰⁴ One by-product of this research is that it may, in some small way, contribute to a greater understanding of the most prominent figure connected with 1798, particularly with the majority of the literature in this area focusing on the United Irishmen as a whole rather than Tone specifically. Historians have begun to see the United Irishmen not as architects of a kind of ‘proto-nationalism’

⁸⁹⁹ Elliott, *Wolfe Tone*, 395–403.

⁹⁰⁰ P.H. Pearse, “An Address Delivered at the Grave of Wolfe Tone in Bodenstown Churchyard - 22 June 1913,” in *How Does She Stand? Three Addresses* (Dublin: “Irish Freedom” Office, 1915), 1–7.

⁹⁰¹ P.H. Pearse, *The Separatist Idea* (Dublin: Whelan, 1916), 4.

⁹⁰² Roy Foster, “Remembering 1798,” in *History and Memory in Modern Ireland*, ed. Ian McBride (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 85. Also see: Tom Dunne, *Rebellions: Memoir, Memory and 1798* (Dublin: Lilliput, 2010).

⁹⁰³ Guy Beiner, *Forgetful Remembrance: Social Forgetting and Vernacular Historiography of a Rebellion in Ulster* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 447. Elliott also notes these issues for Ulster unionists, but also other elements of republican communities once Tone had been ‘claimed’ by “men of violence”. Beiner, *Remembering the Year of the French: Irish Folk History and Social Memory*.

⁹⁰⁴ Peter Collins, *Who Fears to Speak of “98”? Commemoration and the Continuing Impact of the United Irishmen* (Belfast: Ulster Historical Foundation, 2004), 84–155.

preceding the Irish republicanism of the nineteenth century, but as conventional eighteenth-century radicals, a trend followed in this research with regard to Tone.

In seeking to construct the clearest picture to date of Tone's political thought, it is hoped this study will provide one avenue into better understanding the origins of modern Irish republicanism, and in particular, physical-force republicanism, through one of its most recognisable architects. Tone holds his own significance within Ireland, but this thesis also serves to use his ideas as a window illustrating the impact of various political contexts on Irish radical groups. These new interpretations, especially regarding classical republicanism, add an important dynamic to the way we understand how ideas could be moulded and adapted in late eighteenth-century reformist and revolutionary movements.

Possibilities for Further Research

The extent to which Tone's space in Irish public memory and identity is dependent on inaccurate representations of his ideas is a possible avenue for further research, but there remain other unanswered questions. For instance, our understanding of the dynamics of 1790s Irish republicanism could be enhanced by similar studies on other members of the United Irishmen, particularly those key figures such as Russell and Drennan.⁹⁰⁵ Instead, recent trends have veered away from the eighteenth century again, with scholars of Irish republicanism reviving an interest in the 1916 rebellion and its ensuing events because of the 100-year anniversary.

It would be worth discussing the extent to which Tone's personal relationships, whether with other United Irishmen, or with his direct family, contributed to his political development. This has received comparatively little attention in the course of this thesis in order to avoid replicating the existing studies of Dunne and Elliott, both of whom have chosen to focus on his private life to a greater extent. For example, Elliott notes that his relatively early marriage to Matilda Tone shaped his personal ambitions as he struggled to provide for her.⁹⁰⁶ Yet nothing has been said about the possibilities of Matilda's intellectual influence, not least because of a lack of documents from her life. Only in the last two decades has she begun to receive any real attention at all, beginning with Curtin and more recently, Brundage.⁹⁰⁷ Likewise, it can be assumed that the religious background of Tone's parents

⁹⁰⁵ James Quinn, *Soul on Fire: A Life of Thomas Russell* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2002). There is no similar study on Drennan in the English language. Jörg Lahme, *William Drennan Und Der Kampf Um Die Irische Unabhängigkeit: Eine Politische Biographie* (Dusseldorf: Wallstein Verlag, 2012).

⁹⁰⁶ Elliott, *Wolfe Tone*, 59.

⁹⁰⁷ Nancy Curtin, "Matilda Tone and Virtuous Republican Femininity," in *The Women of 1798*, ed. Daire Keogh and Nicholas Furlong (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1998), 26–46; David Brundage, "Matilda Tone in America: Exile, Gender, and Memory in the Making of Irish Republican Nationalism," *New Hibernia Review / Iris Éireannach Nua* 14, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 96–111. Curtin gives reason to believe Matilda was well-educated as

played a role in his counter-sectarianism, but little more thought has been given to the role they played in his development.

Concluding Remarks

Overall, this thesis has demonstrated how the consensus on Tone ought to be revaluated to better reflect the complexities and nuances of his political thought. In fact, Tone provided an in-depth and insightful sustained criticism of British government policy in Ireland. He created a relatively innovative brand of republicanism based on ancient principles by applying them to the Irish context. His writings reveal him to have been partly in tune with the contemporary British, Irish, American, French political scenes, providing a clear example of how eighteenth-century thinkers revitalised classical republicanism, but also expressing some distinct views too. Thanks to the sheer volume of work he left behind, which has been placed under renewed scrutiny in the two decades since the bicentenary of 1798, we now have a better understanding of the philosophical underpinnings of Irish republicanism in the last decade of the eighteenth century. As the ‘father’ of modern republicanism on the island, Tone continues to occupy a unique place in the Irish national imagination when questions about identity remain as pertinent as ever.

she proposes her as having taken a leading role in the collecting and editing of *Life*, having notable input into its direction.

Appendix A: Collection of published works by Theobald Wolfe Tone during his life*

1. Below is a chronological collection of works written by Tone and published during his life. A similar list is available in Moody, T.W, R.B McDowell, and C.J Woods, eds. *The Writings of Theobald Wolfe Tone, 1763-98: France, the Rhine, Lough Swilly, and Death of Tone, January 1797 to November 1798*. Vol. III. Clarendon Press, 1998, 497-502.

A Review of the Conduct of Administration during the Seventh Session of Parliament: Addressed to the Constitutional Electors and Free People of Ireland on the Approaching Dissolution - Published by Order of the Northern Whig Club. Dublin: P. Byrne, 1790.

Spanish War! An Enquiry How far Ireland is Bound, of Right, to Embark in the Impending Contest on the Side of Great Britain, Dublin: P. Byrne, 1790.

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John Keogh and Tone to the Friends of Peace and Harmony at Newry. *Northern Star*, September 5, 1792.

Short Guide to the Constitution of America. *Northern Star*, September 6, 1792.

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X.Y. to the Editor of the Northern Star. *Northern Star*, 22 September 1792.

A Protestant Freeman of Dublin to the Corporation of Dublin. *Hibernian Journal*, September 24 1792.

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Declaration of the Catholics of the County of Down. *Northern Star*, November 7, 1792.
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To the Militia of Ireland, 1796 – Copy held in Archives Nationales, Paris, Archives du Directoire Exécutif, AF III 186 B, dossier 859.

To the Irishmen now serving aboard the British navy, 1796 - Copy held in Archives Nationales, Paris, Archives du Directoire Exécutif, AF III 186 B, dossier 859.

An Address to the Peasantry of Ireland. By a Traveller, 1796. Copy held in Archives Nationales, Paris, Archives du Directoire Exécutif, AF III 186 B, dossier 859.

An Address to the People of Ireland on the Present Important Crisis. By a Traveller, 1796. Copy held in Archives Nationales, Paris, Archives du Directoire Exécutif, AF III 186 B, dossier 859.

*Some of Tone's works and correspondence were later published posthumously, for example in:

Memoirs: The Life of Theobald Wolfe Tone - Written by Himself. Edited by William Theobald Wolfe Tone. (London: Hunt and Clarke), 1826.

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MUN/v/10/1	Register of Degrees.
MS 868-872	Sirr Papers.
MSS 2041-2050, 3805-3806	Tone papers.
MS 868	Thomas Russell Correspondence and Papers, 1792-1802, 1795.

National Archive of Ireland

MS 620	Rebellion Papers, 1795.
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National Library of Ireland

MS 3212	Wolfe Tone Miscellanea Including Copies of His Baptismal Entry (June 1763), His Farewell Letters to His Wife and Father from Prison (November 1798), a Facsimile of a Letter to Pitt on His Plan for a Military Colony in South Seas and an Original Letter to His Friend Starkey Written from London, July 1787.
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Royal Irish Academy

MS 12	Charlemont Papers.
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British Library

MS 38355	Tone's Address to the Court Martial, 1798. Add.
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